DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 028 190 24 TE 499 948

By-Hellerman, Leon

Polk and Mexico: A Study in Presidential Leadership and the Use of Power. Teacher and Student Manuals.

Amherst Coll., Mass.

Spons Agency-Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Bureau of Research.

Report No-CRP-H-168

Bureau No-BR-5-1071

Pub Date 67

Contract-OEC-5-10-158

Note-82p.

EDRS Price MF-$0.50 HC-$4.20

Descriptors-*American History, Area Studies, Curriculum Guides, *Foreign Policy, Foreign Relations, History, *History Instruction, Instructional Materials, Mexican American History, *Political Power, Political Science, *Presidents, Secondary Education, Social Sciences, Social Studies, Social Studies Units, United States History

Identifiers-James K. Polk, *Mexican American War

Focusing on James K. Polk's handling of the diplomatic crisis with Mexico, which followed his accession to office, and on the results of the Mexican War, this unit asks the student to evaluate Polk's actions. In the evaluation, the student must assess the responsibilities of presidential leadership and confront the implications of power in international affairs. Subsidiary questions include the relationship between the President and Congress in the making of foreign policy, the problem of criticizing a President's wartime policies, and the question of whether war is ever justified as an instrument of national policy. (Author)

ED028190

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

POLK AND MEXICO:
A STUDY IN PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP AND THE USE OF POWER

Teacher and Student Manuals

(Public Domain Edition)

Leon Hellerman

Committee on the Study of History
Amherst, Massachusetts

TE 499 948

EXPERIMENTAL MATERIAL
SUBJECT TO REVISION
PUBLIC DOMAIN EDITION

TEACHER'S MANUAL

POLK AND MEXICO: A STUDY IN PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP AND THE USE OF POWER

Leon Hellerman
Hewlett High School
Hewlett, New York

**This material has been produced
by the
Committee on the Study of History, Amherst, Massachusetts
under contract with the U. S. Office of Education
as Cooperative Research Project #H-168**

This unit focusses on James K. Polk's handling of the diplomatic crisis with Mexico which followed his accession to office and on the results of the Mexican War. By asking the student to evaluate Polk's actions, it invites him to assess the responsibilities of presidential leadership, and to confront the implications of power in international affairs.

Other fundamental questions students are asked to consider include the role of manifest destiny in American history, the working relationship between the President and Congress in foreign policy matters, the problem of criticizing a President's wartime policies, and the justice of the Mexican War itself. Other questions may arise as students examine the material and find additional problems pertinent to their own world.

This unit offers no "right" or "wrong" answers but leaves the investigator free to formulate his own conclusions.

There are, of course, limitations to this unit, It is not intended to be a history of the Mexican War, nor does the material lend itself to a full and complete study of the causes of the war. Students who wish to explore these areas might be referred to some of the material listed under Suggestions for Additional Reading. The teacher should feel free to add or change material to meet his own purposes.

The questions raised and the techniques suggested in this manual are by no means definitive. Any number of questions might be asked and the teacher may decide to use many classroom techniques not suggested by the writer. If the students are thinking, asking questions and perhaps a little excited, the classroom experience and the material will be a success.

INTRODUCTION

In the Introduction students are asked to consider a passage from The Prince typical of Machiavelli's thinking. Machiavelli maintains that successful rulers need a special code of conduct. This code permits the ruler to act "contrary to fidelity, friendship, humanity and religion" so long as it advances the cause of the state.

Students might be asked to briefly describe what Machiavelli sees as the tools of statecraft. A list might be made and kept by the students for later reference.

Students could also be asked: Is Machiavelli's point of view realistic, immoral, or what? Students might consider if it is possible for rulers to govern in a manner consistent with generally accepted ethical standards or whether this might unnecessarily endanger the state? Do "good guys finish last"in international relations? This could be the topic for a student paper.

Once students have considered the ideas and implications of Machiavelli, they may be able to make judgments later on in this unit as to whether or not Polk used power in a Machiavellian fashion.

SECTION I

THE NEW PRESIDENT INHERITS A PROBLEM

Section I is divided into three parts: Part A - the Mexican problem facing Polk as he took office, Part B - the climate of popular opinion regarding expansion, and Part C - a map showing the territorial growth of the United States as of 1844.

Part A invites the student to examine the Mexican problem faced by newly inaugurated President Polk. The unresolved border dispute between Texas and Mexico became a problem for the United States on the eve of Polk's inauguration when Congress authorized the annexation of Texas. Significant in terms of later events is that part of the Congressional resolution which provided that the State to be formed was "subject to the adjustment of all questions of boundary that may arise with other governments," a provision that, in effect, left the settlement of the border dispute in the hands of the President. To further complicate matters for Polk, the Mexican government decided to break off diplomatic relations with the United States as a consequence of the Congressional action annexing Texas (A-2).

Students should be clear as to why the Mexican government broke off diplomatic relations. Almonte's note (A-2) is the fullest explanation. Polk's responsibility or lack of it might be discussed by the class. Students might be asked then to generalize about the problems a new President must face. To what extent is the new President free to develop policies and to deal with problems of his own choosing?

Some students might be asked to write a short composition explaining what they would have done in Polk's position.

Part B makes it possible for the students to consider the climate of opinion in which President Polk found himself. In the 1840's a confident American public awakened to the attractions of continental expansion, and statements supporting manifest destiny were widely applauded. Documents 1 to 8 and 10 to 12 assert the doctrine of manifest destiny and give the student an opportunity to examine its component parts. For example, the claim that American institutions were superior and that we were, therefore, destined to expand to the Pacific and perhaps beyond. The statement of Representative Robert C. Winthrop (#9), a critic of manifest destiny, offers the student an opportunity to question the validity of the doctrine.

In order to relate the material to Polk, the student might be asked to consider the influence that public opinion might have on the President.

Students might also be asked to consider what the documents reveal about how Americans viewed themselves and their institutions. Did they have any right to feel as they did? The students might pursue the question by considering whether Americans still feel this way today. Are Americans today, perhaps, less confident about our destiny?

As an assignment, the students might be asked to assume the role of an American of the 1840's and develop his own statement about the manifest destiny of the United States.

During the discussion of manifest destiny, the teacher might want to play "devil's advocate" and suggest that the "superiority" of American institutions did indeed make logical our continental expansion.

SECTION II

THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE

Section II has four parts: Part A - a chronological listing of the major events, Part B - an examination of Polk's goals, Part C - the early diplomatic attempts of the President to gain California and Mexico, and Part D - the sequence of events that led to the outbreak of hostilities.

This section asks the student to consider the response of the President to the specific problem of Mexico and to the wider problem of territorial expansion. Students should be encouraged to "play detective," asking "what is Polk up to," "what is he trying to do?"

Part A, a chronological listing of the major events, provides the student with a ready reference.

Part B has the student examine two Presidential statements, one public, his inaugural address (#1), and the other private, a remark to George Bancroft, his Secretary of the Navy (#2). The two glaringly contradict each other, for the public statement made no mention of Polk's determination to acquire California. Based on these two documents, students might be asked to determine what they think is the President's goal in relation to territorial expansion? Was it right for Polk to want California? Would it have been right for him not to want it, in the event that it subsequently became available? Would it have been right for him not to be aware that this might soon be the case and to plan accordingly? To what extent does prophecy on the part of the leader of a powerful nation tend to become self-fulfilling?

Another question that might be considered is why President Polk made no mention of California in his public address? Students may then ask if it is wise for a President to announce publicly all his goals? Indeed, it may even be suggested that it could prove disastrous if he did so. Students might pursue this line of discussion and gain some valuable insight into the nature of presidential leadership and the problem of control that this poses for a democratic state.

Part C has the student examine the President's diplomatic attempts to achieve his goals. Buchanan's note to Parrot (#1) and to Wilson Shannon (#2) indicate that Polk wanted to establish friendly relations with Mexico. Yet in Bancroft's dispatch to Sloat (#4) and Buchanan's instructions to Larkin (#9) we may be seeing another goal of the President. Students, however, should be alerted to the ambivalent nature of the dispatches. It might be suggested that Polk was takingproper precautionary measures in the light of the fluid situation in California. The instructions to John Slidell (#13) do make clear that the President is after California and New Mexico, at least if he can get them peacefully.

Students might be asked if Polk "is being on the level" with Mexico, or they might be asked to explain what they think the President is up to.

Students should note the different titles used by Mexican and American diplomats in referring to the representative of the United States who was to go to Mexico. Parrott's note to Buchanan (#5) refers to the Mexican willingness to receive a "commissioner" or "Envoy." Polk himself in his Diary entries of 16 September (#6) and 17 September (#7) refers to a "Minister." Secretary of State Buchanan refers to an "Envoy" in his message to Black (#8). Consul Black's note to Buchanan (#10) makes no reference at all except to "a person to be sent out." The dispatch from the Mexican minister Pena y Pena (#11) refers to a "commissioner" to "settle the dispute," but Polk in his Diary entry of 10 November (#12) and Buchanan in Slidell's instructions (#13) refer to Slidell as "Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary." Students should realize that, if the Mexican government received Slidell as Minister Plenipotentiary, it would mean that Mexico was restoring formal diplomatic relations with the United States and might even leave the Mexican government open to the charge that they were accepting the United States' annexation of Texas. Accepting a "commissioner" would carry no such meaning. The importance of the difference in title will become clear to students in Section II, D, when the Mexican government expresses its refusal to receive Slidell because of his title of Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary.

In his December 2, 1845 annual message (#14) President Polk again speaks to the public. Students might want to determine if Polk's review of the situation is consistent with his actions and speculate on why the President chose not to mention certain of his actions, such as the instructions to Slidell to negotiate for the purchase of New Mexico and California.

Part D considers the sequence of events that eventually led to war. Students might be asked to explain why they think we had a war with Mexico? Was President Polk responsible? Were the Mexicans?

The Mexican refusal to receive Slidell is contained in Slidell's note to Buchanan (#1), Pena y Pena's official reply (#2) and Black's dispatch to Buchanan (#3). Students should note that Slidell's title of "envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary" was unacceptable to Mexican officials, who claimed that they had only agreed to receive a "commissioner." Students may wish to consider the pressures, such as the opposition party and Mexican public opinion, working on the Mexican government. They might be asked: How reasonable is the Mexican refusal to receive Slidell?

The students' awareness of the sequence of events is vital at this point if they are to conjecture about cause and effect. General Taylor is ordered to proceed to the Rio Grande (Rio del Norte) (#4) the day after Polk received the news from Slidell (#1) and Black (#3) of the Mexican government's refusal to receive the American representative.

Students might note the Polk Diary entry of May 5 (#10). What kind of information is the President waiting for from General Taylor? The May 9 Diary entry (#11), showing that the President had determined on war even before news of the clash between Mexican and United States forces, may shock some students and cause them to question Polk's motives.

The President's war message (#12) is another public statement. In the light of what the students know from reading the documents, they may find it exciting to review the President's message. They might well come to the conclusion that Polk has not been altogether truthful. For example, no mention is made by Polk about the willingness of the Mexicans, at least at first, to receive a "commissioner."

This again raises the question of presidential leadership in a democracy. Some students may consider the implications in terms of our system of checks and balances and may wonder where this leaves the Congress. Other students may question how the President can be given the freedom he needs to conduct foreign affairs and still be kept under control. Students might be encouraged to note similarities between the situation in 1846 and today. Most students might recognize the dilemma that this question of presidential leadership poses for the nation.

Some light on Polk's goals and possibly his actions is shed by his Diary entry of May 13 (#13). In this entry Polk refuses to permit Secretary of State Buchanan to commit the United States to a "no territorial gain" policy, even at the risk of war with Britain. Students may well ask if the President had perhaps manipulated events so that a clash between Mexico and the United States was inevitable, thus giving him a pretext for war and territorial expansion. There is, of course, no "correct" answer to this question and this is where the student can "play detective."

Evidence which some might consider damaging to Polk is offered in the statement by Benjamin Green (#14) who testified that Polk knew that the Mexicans would refuse to receive his representative if he insisted on calling him a "minister" rather than "commissioner." Students should be reminded that Green's statement was made some forty-five years after the events mentioned. In addition, Green had served Tyler in the previous Whig administration.

SECTION III

CONGRESS DEBATES A DECLARATION OF WAR

Section III has the student consider a problem inherent in the Constitution. The President is given the initiative in the conduct of foreign affairs and is commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Yet the power to declare war is reserved to Congress.

The main question that might be raised is: Does Congress actually make the decision as to when the nation goes to war? Students may suggest in the course of discussion that tighter control be imposed on the presidential initiative in foreign affairs and over the President's use of the military. Some may even suggest that Congress might be given a more immediate role in these areas. Other students, however, may suggest that four or five hundred hands may be even worse than one. Again students are confronted with a dilemma that defies a neat, clear-cut, packaged answer.

The Congressional debate should be familiar to students who live in the shadow of the Cold War and are aware of United States military commitments in Vietnam. Senators Calhoun, Morehead, Davis, J. M. Clayton and Berrien are, in one way or another, critical of the President and opposed to an immediate declaration of war. Senators Cass, Sevier, Allen and Houston could be termed the "hawks." They defended the President's actions and supported an immediate declaration of war against Mexico. Students may find surprisingly modern the closing remark of Senator Cass on May 12 in which he proposes to "conquer a peace at the point of a bayonet."

Some students may note that, with the exception of Calhoun, Polk's critics are all Whigs. The students may then raise the question: What part did politics play in the debate? They should be aware, however, that in spite of the Whig criticism only two Whigs voted against the declaration of war. Perhaps at this point they might discover how sensitive elected public officials are to public opinion. Few elected officials dare to vote against the opinions of their constituents, and of those who do very few survive at the polls. Students might be referred to John F. Kennedy's Profiles in Courage.

Democrat Calhoun's political maneuvering, an attempt to gain support for a future presidential nomination, might be the subject of a special student report.

This entire section might lend itself to a role-playing situation. The class could become the Senate and debate the declaration of war. This role-playing might be done even before the students read the material in this Section III.

SECTION IV

THE POLITICS OF WAR

This section, which provides the student an opportunity to discuss a problem somewhat removed from the major questions raised thus far, considers the problem of criticizing a President and his policies during wartime. The main question that might be raised in Section IV is: Why is criticism of the President so controversial during wartime?

In his second annual message of December 8, 1946 (#1) President Polk accused his critics of giving "aid and comfort" to the enemy. His remarks touched off a storm of controversy in the Congress. Representatives Josua R. Giddings (#2) and Robert C. Winthrop (#4) lash out at the President and defend the right to dissent, even during wartime. Representatives Isaac Morse (#3) and Senator Lewis Cass (#5) support the President's point of view.

Some students may feel that a war situation is so dangerous to the nation's survival that freedom must be limited. Other students may take the position that once we limit freedom we may have lost what we were fighting for in the first place. The students may discover that there is no easy solution, perhaps no solution at all, to this problem that has been with us since the first years of the republic.

SECTION V

THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO

The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is examined in this section. Students might wish to compare Polk's remark that "The war has not been waged with a view to conquest" found in his second annual message December 8, 1846 (Section IV, 1) with the instructions given his peace negotiator Nicholas P. Trist to obtain New Mexico and California from Mexico (Section V, 1).

In his third annual message of December 7, 1847 (#2) the President defended his plans to acquire New Mexico and California. Some students may be amused by Polk's reasoning that we were actually benefitting Mexico by taking the territory, while others may take a cynical view of the entire speech. Students might be asked why the President bothered to justify his actions at all? The need of the President to gain the support of the American public should be apparent to students. It might be suggested that Americans like the record to show that we were doing the "fair" and "right" thing.

Some students at this point may suggest that our payment for the land was, perhaps, to ease our own guilt feelings. Perhaps we wanted history to record our acquisition of New Mexico and California as a simple business transaction. Other students might suggest that President Polk was being excessively generous in paying Mexico for land that was no longer hers. Both points of view can easily be defended and again students may discover that there are no easy answers for the student of history.

SECTION VI

A JUST WAR?

This final section raises the question as to whether the Mexican War was a just war.

Students may want to discuss this question on two levels. They may first want to determine if the United States had legitimate grievances against Mexico. Did the Mexican refusal to pay the claims for damages of United States citizens, the refusal to receive an American envoy, and the clash at the Rio Grande provide sufficient cause for a declaration of war? The students might be asked to read again Polk's war message of May 11, 1846 (II, D-12) and his second annual message of December 8, 1848 (IV, 1) in which Polk declares that "long before the advance of our army to the left bank of the Rio Grande we had ample cause of war against Mexico."

The Mexican point of view (#1) is that the United States took advantage of Mexico's weakness to wage an aggressive war and seize New Mexico and California. Polk and the United States are defended by Samuel Flagg Bemis (#2), who feels Polk was reasonable and responsible in his actions. Justin Smith (#3) presents the point of view that Mexico actually wanted the war.

Students might be asked if Vattel (#4), in describing the just causes of war, would have approved the Mexican War? Most students will probably agree that Vattel's criteria do not justify the United States declaration of war.

Some students may insist that the United States, even if it did take advantage of "weak" Mexico, was not unique in that regard. As one of the Dead Sea scrolls puts it: [This selection asks if any nation wants to be taken over and plundered by a more powerful nation and whether there is a single nation that hasn't "oppressed" its neighbor.][1]

On another level students may find that Vattel (#5) offers some justification for the war in his declaration that the "Law of Nations will only recognize the ownership and sovereignty of a Nation over unoccupied lands when the Nation is in actual occupation of them, when it forms a settlement upon them, or makes some actual use of them . . ." Students might question whether this would include Mexican California and New Mexico, in view of the sparseness of Mexican settlement. Some students might point out that Vattel, an 18th century writer, might have been attempting to justify European expansion in the New World. Other students will probably challenge the validity of his entire thesis.

Von Holst (#6) defends in no uncertain terms the Mexican War, and students might be asked to react to his point of view. Von Holst maintains that the Mexican War was in the "general interest of civilization" and that though it was "a war of conquest . . . history can not for that reason declare it a dark page in the annals of the Union." Students will probably note that Von Holst is predicating his argument on some of the same assumptions that the proponents of the doctrine of manifest destiny mentioned in the 1840's.

---

[1] Hans J. Morgenthau, Policies Among Nations (Alfred A. Knopf, N. Y., 1960), 34.

The teacher might even suggest that, since the Mexican War served the larger purpose of advancing civilization, it was thus in a sense a just and moral war. Or putting it another way, the end did justify the means.

Von Holst also suggests that the historians cannot decide the acts of a nation "by the code of private morals." Students might suggest that this is Machiavelli all over again.

Finally, in attempting to assess Polk's leadership and his use of power, students might want to react to the observation of George P. Grayson, who in 1906 wrote in his Westward Extension 1841-1850: [Grayson suggests that even those who condemn polk's methods would not wish for his work to be "undone."][2]

---

[2] George P. Grayson, Westward Extension 1841-1850 (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1906), 207.

BR-5-1077
PA-24
OE-BR

EXPERIMENTAL MATERIAL
SUBJECT TO REVISION
PUBLIC DOMAIN EDITION

STUDENT'S MANUAL

POLK AND MEXICO: A STUDY IN PRESIDENTIAL LEADERSHIP AND THE USE OF POWER

Leon Hellerman
Hewlett High School
Hewlett, New York

This material has been produced
by the
Committee on the Study of History, Amherst, Massachusetts
under contract with the U. S. Office of Education
as Cooperative Research Project #H-168

NOTE TO THE PUBLIC DOMAIN EDITION

This unit was prepared by the Committee on the Study of History, Amherst College, under contract with the United States Office of Education. It is one of a number of units prepared by the Amherst Project, and was designed to be used either in series with other units from the Project or independently, in conjunction with other materials. While the units were geared initially for college-preparatory students at the high school level, experiments with them by the Amherst Project suggest the adaptability of many of them, either wholly or in part, for a considerable range of age and ability levels, as well as in a number of different kinds of courses.

The units have been used experimentally in selected schools throughout the country, in a wide range of teaching/learning situations. The results of those experiments will be incorporated in the Final Report of the Project on Cooperative Research grant H-168, which will be distributed through ERIC.

Except in one respect, the unit reproduced here is the same as the experimental unit prepared and tried out by the Project. The single exception is the removal of excerpted articles which originally appeared elsewhere and are under copyright. While the Project received special permission from authors and publishers to use these materials in its experimental edition, the original copyright remains in force, and the Project cannot put such materials in the public domain. They have been replaced in the present edition by bracketed summaries, and full bibliographical references have been included in order that the reader may find the material in the original.

This unit was initially prepared in the summer of 1967

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.. 1

I - THE NEW PRESIDENT INHERITS A PROBLEM.......................... 3

- A. The Problem... 5
- B. Manifest Destiny in American Thought of the 1840's...... 6
- C. Territorial Growth of the United States to 1844......... 13

II - THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE.................................... 14

- A. Chronology of Events...................................... 14
- B. The Goal.. 15
- C. Diplomacy Attempted....................................... 17
- D. Diplomacy Ends and Hostilities Begin...................... 25

III - CONGRESS DEBATES A DECLARATION OF WAR........................ 39

IV - THE POLITICS OF WAR... 47

V - THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO............................... 53

VI - A JUST WAR?... 59

SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL READING............................... 65

INTRODUCTION

Niccolo Machiavelli, a native of sixteenth century Florence, wrote in The Prince what he thought he saw were the policies and rules of conduct followed by the successful rulers of his day. He meant the book as a political handbook for the inexperienced ruler. Specifically, Machiavelli had in mind the powerful Medici family that had gained control of his native Florence.

The Prince has, perhaps, been quoted by politicians and statesmen more often than any other book on political theory. Even today Machiavelli's words have a modern ring. Machiavellian behavior is commonly associated with cunning, bad faith and devious conduct.

In the selection below Machiavelli considers the standards of conduct the ruler should follow. Do you agree that a ruler should be guided by these principles or do you feel some other standards are needed?[1]

> [Under the heading "Concerning the Way in Which Princes Should Keep Faith," Machiavelli pointed out that those leaders who have accomplished the most have not relied solely on good faith but have used craft. Machiavelli held that there were two ways of "contesting, the one by law, the other by force; the first is proper to men, the second to beasts." A prince must know how to use both methods. When compelled to act like a beast, a prince should emulate the fox and the lion, "a fox to discover the snares and a lion to terrify the wolves." The prince should, however, appear to be "altogether merciful, faithful, humane, upright, and religious" for everyone is aware of what he appears to be, while few know the reality, "and in the actions of all men, and especially of princes, . . . one judges by the result."]

---

[1] Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince (W. K. Marriott, trans., J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London, 1940), 137-140.

SECTION I

THE NEW PRESIDENT INHERITS A PROBLEM

James K. Polk was inaugurated President on March 4, 1845. The new Chief Executive inherited many of the problems of the outgoing Tyler administration. Not the least of these was the steadily worsening relations between Mexico and the United States.

Mexico had gained its independence from Spain in 1821. Almost immediately bad feelings developed between the young republic and its northern neighbor. The United States was disappointed and appalled by the political chaos and seemingly never-ending power struggles in Mexico. American citizens on many occasions had received rough treatment at the hands of Mexican officials. Merchants repeatedly had been harassed. The claims of American citizens against the Mexican government for damages stood at over six million dollars, with Mexico either unable or unwilling to make payment.

On the other hand Mexico resented what it considered to be the haughty attitude of her neighbor. Perhaps Mexicans were envious of the wealth and power of the United States. In addition, the Mexican fears were aroused by the driving westward expansion of the Americans.

Relations were further aggravated when the settlers in the Mexican province of Texas were successful in gaining their independence. During the 1820's Mexican leaders had encouraged Americans to settle in Texas and by 1830 some 20,000 Americans were living there. That year, however, the Mexican government prohibited any further emigration from the United States. In 1836 the American inhabitants of Texas rose in rebellion, and within a year independence was an accomplished fact. The United States gave diplomatic recognition to Texas in March, 1837. Mexican leaders refused to recognize the independence of Texas and saw in the success of the Texans the hand of the United States.

The Lone Star Republic of Texas immediately offered itself to the United States for annexation. But opposition in the Congress to the extension of slavery stalled any action. Both Presidents Jackson and Van Buren were anxious to avoid an issue that was so politically explosive. Finally, President Tyler, toward the end of his administration and with little to lose politically, proposed the annexation of Texas.

This was the situation when James K. Polk emerged on the national scene. Polk was the first "dark horse" candidate for president. Martin Van Buren, the former president, was the "front runner" but had been unable to muster the needed two-thirds of the delegates necessary for the Democratic nomination, partially because of his opposition to the immediate annexation of Texas. A candidate was needed to avoid a deadlocked convention. Polk received forty-four votes on the seventh ballot (he had none on the first six) and was the unanimous choice fon the eighth. In the election campaign that followed the Whigs were to gibe, "Who is James K. Polk?"

The election of 1844 was noted for its closeness. Polk defeated his popular and well-known Whig opponent, Henry Clay, by a mere 38,000 votes out of the more than two and one-half million ballots cast. The overriding issue of the campaign had been expansion. The Democratic party called for the annexation of Texas and the occupation of all Oregon. Clay equivocated on the issue. Polk's own commitment to territorial expansion had been clear and unqualified.

While Texas and Oregon were the central issues of the day, over the horizon loomed still another possible goal for American expansion. Already by 1844 there were signs that the Mexican province of California was following the same pattern which had led to Texan independence some ten years before. A swelling stream of Americans had been settling in California, which was only sparsely settled by Mexicans. The Mexican government of the province was weak and inefficient, and the settlers were showing signs of dissatisfaction with Mexican rule.

A. The Problem

On February 28, 1845, less than a week before Polk's inauguration, Congress passed a joint resolution providing for the annexation of Texas. The resolution declared that the State to be formed was "subject to the adjustment of all questions of boundary that may arise with other governments."[1]

The southern boundary of Texas had been far from clear even in the days of Spanish and Mexican control. But in 1845 Texas claimed the Rio Grande (Rio del Norte) as its southern boundary, while Mexico insisted the Nueces marked the limits of Texas.

1. A map showing the area disputed by Mexico and Texas:[2] [The map has been deleted.]

---

[1] The Congressional Globe, 28th Cong., 2nd Sess., 362.

[2] Thomas A. Bailey, A Diplomatic History of the American People (F. S. Crofts & Co., New York, 1940), 263.

2. In annexing Texas Congress brought the situation with Mexico to a head. Juan Almonte, Mexican Minister to the United States, addressed the following note to John C. Calhoun, the Secretary of State of the outgoing administration:[3]

> [The Mexican Minister expressed his "profound regret" that Congress had admitted the "Mexican Province of Texas" into the United States. He regarded this as an unjust act of aggression against a friendly state and protested against this action "in the most solemn manner." He stated that this in no way invalidated Mexico's rights to recover the province of Texas, rights that Mexico would maintain and uphold "at all times, by every means which may be in her power."
>
> As a result of this action, the Minister asked for his passport, announcing that his mission had ceased]

B. Manifest Destiny in American Thought of the 1840's

Statements on the mission and special destiny of the United States can be found early in the country's history. John Adams wrote in 1765 that he considered "the settlement of America with reverence and wonder, as the opening of a grand scene and design in Providence for the illumination of the ignorant, and the emancipation of the slavish part of mankind all over the earth."[4] Thomas Jefferson in his First Inaugural Address called the United States "the world's best hope."[5] Earlier he had suggested, "Our confederacy must be viewed as the nest from which all America, North and South is to be peopled."[6] Representative David Trimble of Kentucky on April 4, 1820 proclaimed that "The Great Engineer of the Universe has fixed the natural limits of our country, and man cannot change them; To that boundary we shall go; 'peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must . . ."[7] Andrew Jackson, while urging the annexation of Texas, declared that "the annexation of Texas to the United States promises to enlarge the circle of free institutions."[8]

---

[3] William Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence of the United States: Inter-American Affairs 1831-1860 (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, 1937), VIII, 699-700.

[4] Charles Francis Adams, ed., The Works of John Adams (Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1856), I, 66.

[5] James D. Richardson, ed., A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents 1789-1907 (Bureau of National Literature and Art, Washington, 1908), I, 322.

In the 1840's there was a surge of interest in territorial expansion, and statements about the destiny of the United States appeared more frequently.

1. The Boston Times, near the end of 1844, observed:[9]

> [The young, "overpowering" spirit of "Young America" will not rest on its achievements but must "press onward" with the hopes of all humanity at stake, it would be "as easy to stay the swelling of the ocean with a grain of sand . . . as to stop the advancement of this truly democratic and omnipotent spirit of the age."]

---

[6] Thomas Jefferson, letter to Archibald Stuart, January 25, 1786 in Paul L. Ford, ed., The Writings of Thomas Jefferson (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1894), IV, 189.

[7] Annals of Congress, 16th Cong., 1st Sess., II, Col. 1762.

[8] Andrew Jackson to A. V. Brown, February 12, 1843 in James Parton, Life of Andrew Jackson (Mason Brothers, New York, 1861), III, 660.

[9] Boston Times, December 11, 1844 in Frederick Merk, Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1963), 53.

2. Representative James E. Belser, Democrat of Alabama, said on January 3, 1845:[10]

> What is to become of our population in a half century or a century hence? According to a calculation derived from the best of sources, in fifty years it will number one hundred millions; and in double that period, three hundred millions. . . . Freedom's pure and heavenly light was here, and it would continue to burn, with increasing brightness, till it had illumined this entire continent.
>
> Why, what did gentlemen suppose was to become of the rising generation in the West? Did they think it was to stay there, to vegetate like a plant and die on the spot where it grew? No, you had as well attempt to arrest Niagara. It would go onward and onward; it would fill Oregon; it would fill Texas; it would pour like a cataract over the Rocky mountains, and, passing to the great lakes of the West, it would open the forests of that far distant wilderness to the light of the rising sun. And whoever should live and visit this continent at that day might hear the voice of the American reaper on the far shores of the Pacific.

3. A few days later, on January 10, Representative Ezra Dean, Democrat of Ohio said:[11]

> I am anxious to go on and add State to State; and it requires no great stretch of the imagination to anticipate not only the annexation of Texas and Oregon, but of every nation on this continent, from the polar regions of the north to its extreme southern limits. The light of liberty and the power of freedom must be felt by all the nations on this continent; and they will yet rise in their majesty and shake off the shackles which have bound them, and assume the rank which it was intended they should occupy by nature, and by nature's God.

4. Representative John Wentworth, Democrat of Illinois, observed on January 27:[12]

> Mr. W. said, many of this body would live to hear the sound from the Speaker's chair, "the gentleman from Texas." He wanted them also to hear "the gentleman from Oregon." He would even go further, and have "the gentleman from Nova

---

[10] Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 28th Cong., 2nd Sess., 43.

[11] Ibid., 105.

[12] The Congressional Globe, 28th Cong., 2nd Sess., 200.

> Scotia," "the gentleman from Canada," "the gentleman from Cuba," "the gentleman from Mexico," ay, even "the gentleman from Patagonia." He did not believe the God of Heaven, when he crowned the American arms with success, designed that the original states should be the only abode of liberty on earth. On the contrary, he only designed them as the great centre from which civilization, religion, and liberty should radiate and radiate until the whole continent should bask in their blessings.

5. Two days later Representative Alexander Duncan, Whig of Ohio, said:[13]

> Sir, we have a western enterprise, and a spirit of emigration, which nothing but the lashing billows of the Pacific can restrain on the northwest; nothing short of eternal winter on the north, and nothing short of Darien's straits on the south, if it engulf not all South America itself. . . . This spirit of enterprise that is over-spreading the West and the South, and will embrace the North as the cloud of Elijah overspread the heavens, is a continued conquest, not of the sword, that has blood for its means, laurels for its reward, and slavery and subjugation for its end; it is a conquest of patriotism, virtue, and morality--that has the love of liberty for its means, liberty itself for its reward, and the spread of free principles and republican institutions as far and as wide as the American continent. And it is this spirit of enterprise, and love of new territory, which is to accomplish that design. . . .

6. The widely read and influential Democratic Review spoke about the future growth of the United States:[14]

> Texas has been absorbed into the Union in the inevitable fulfilment of the general law which is rolling our population westward. . . .
>
> California will, probably, next fall away from the loose adhesion which, in such a country as Mexico, holds a remote province in a slight equivocal kind of dependence on the metropolis. Imbecile and distracted, Mexico never can exert any real governmental authority over such a country. The impotence of the one and the distance of the other, must make

---

[13] Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 28th Cong., 2nd Sess., 178.

[14] "Annexation," Democratic Review, XVII (July and August, 1845), 7, 9.

> the relation one of virtual independence; unless, by stunting the province of all natural growth, and forbidding that immigration which can alone develope its capabilities and fulfil the purposes of its creation, tyranny may retain a military dominion which is no government in the legitimate sense of the term. In the case of California this is now impossible. The Anglo-Saxon foot is already on its borders. Already the advance guard of the irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration has begun to pour down upon it, armed with the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting-houses. A population will soon be in actual occupation of California, over which it will be idle for Mexico to dream of dominion. They will necessarily become dependent. All this without agency of our government, without responsibility of our people--in the natural flow of events, the spontaneous working of principles, and the adaptation of the tendencies and wants of the human race to the elemental circumstances in the midst of which they find themselves placed. And they will have a right to independence--to self-government--to the possession of the homes conquered from the wilderness by their own labors and dangers, sufferings and sacrifices--a better and a truer right than the artificial title of sovereignty in Mexico a thousand miles distant, inheriting from Spain a title good only against those who have none better. . . .

7. The New York Morning News spoke of the growth of the United States:[15]

> [The New York Morning News pointed out that public opinion repudiated "possession without use," a doctrine that was "gradually acquiring the force of established public law." On this basis, no "nominal and conventional" boundary could stop the march of Americans toward the Pacific. Having made use of the land Americans could "with propriety turn to the world and ask, whom have we injured."

8. Representative Edward D. Baker, Whig of Illinois, spoke on January 3, 1846:[16]

> Mr. Baker said that we, the people of the United States had spread, were spreading, and intended to spread, and should spread, and go on to spread. [A laugh.] . . . We had a continent before us in which to spread our free principles, our language, our literature, and power; and we had a present right to provide for this future progress. To do so was to secure our safety, in the widest and the highest sense; and this our destiny had now become so manifest that it could not fail but by our own folly. . . .

---

[15] New York Morning News, October 13, 1845 in Frederick Merk, Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History, 25.

[16] The Congressional Globe, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., 136.

9. Representative Robert C. Winthrop, Whig of Massachusetts, speaking the same day, condemned manifest destiny:[17]

> There is one element in our title, however, which I confess that I have not named, and to which I may not have done entire justice. I mean that new revelation of right which has been designated as *the right of our manifest destiny to spread over this whole continent*. . . . The right of our manifest destiny! There is a right for a new chapter in the law of nations; or rather, in the special laws of our own country; for I suppose the right of a manifest destiny to spread will not be admitted to exist in any nation except the universal Yankee nation! This right of our manifest destiny, Mr. Speaker, reminds me of another source of title, which is worthy of being placed beside it. Spain and Portugal, we all know, in the early part of the sixteenth century, laid claim to the jurisdiction of this whole northern continent of America. Francis I. is said to have replied to this pretension, that he should like to see the clause in *Adam's Will* in which their exclusive title was found. Now, sir, I look for an early reproduction of this idea. I have no doubt that, if due search be made, a copy of this primeval instrument, with a clause giving us the whole of Oregon, can be somewhere hunted up. . . .

10. On January 14, 1846 Representative John S. Chipman answered Representative Winthrop and spoke of the right of the United States to the Oregon territory:[18]

> Great Britain had no claim to the territory. There was still another reason, which was found, not in Adam's will, as the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Winthrop] had suggested, but in the will of Providence, and in the destiny of this country, which had directed that the whole territory from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Frozen ocean to the Isthmus of Panama or the Straits of Magellan, if gentlemen pleased, should belong to a free people. It was destined that this country should belong to one people and be under one government, and that they should exercise jurisdiction over the whole continent. Looking through the vista of coming years, and reflecting what we were fifty years ago, and what we are now--reflecting that from three millions we had increased to twenty

---

[17] *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., 99.

[18] *The Congressional Globe*, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., 207.

> millions, we could not resist the conclusion that Yankee enterprise and vigor--he used the term Yankee in reference to the whole country--were destined to spread our possessions and institutions over the whole continent. Could any act of the Government prevent this? He must be allowed to say that wherever the Yankee slept for a night, there he would rule. What part of the globe had not been a witness of their moral power, and to the light reflected from their free institutions? Their progress could not be anywhere resisted. This continent will be our own; and gentlemen may say it is by manifest destiny, or by Adam's will, or by whatever else they will. That destiny was found written in every page of our history. . . .

11. In the course of the same debate Representative John A. McClernand, Democrat of Illinois, issued a warning to politicians:[19]

> I warn great men and small--those who aspire and those who do not--to beware of the hostile influence of this question. It is the great question of the age, and is pregnant with a power to make and unmake statesmen and administrations. The unbought and unpurchasable masses will adhere to it against war, against politicians, against administrations--they will never desert it. It is their question--it involves their interests and strikes upon the chords of their patriotism and a nation's ambition. No political intrigue can arrest it--no artificial obstacle defeat it. It is urged on by a power that knows no limits except those which exhausted nature assigns to soaring genius and unshackled enterprise; its energy is in free principles, and its triumph in Republican institutions. . . .

12. The poet Walt Whitman working as editor of the Brooklyn Eagle wrote:[20]

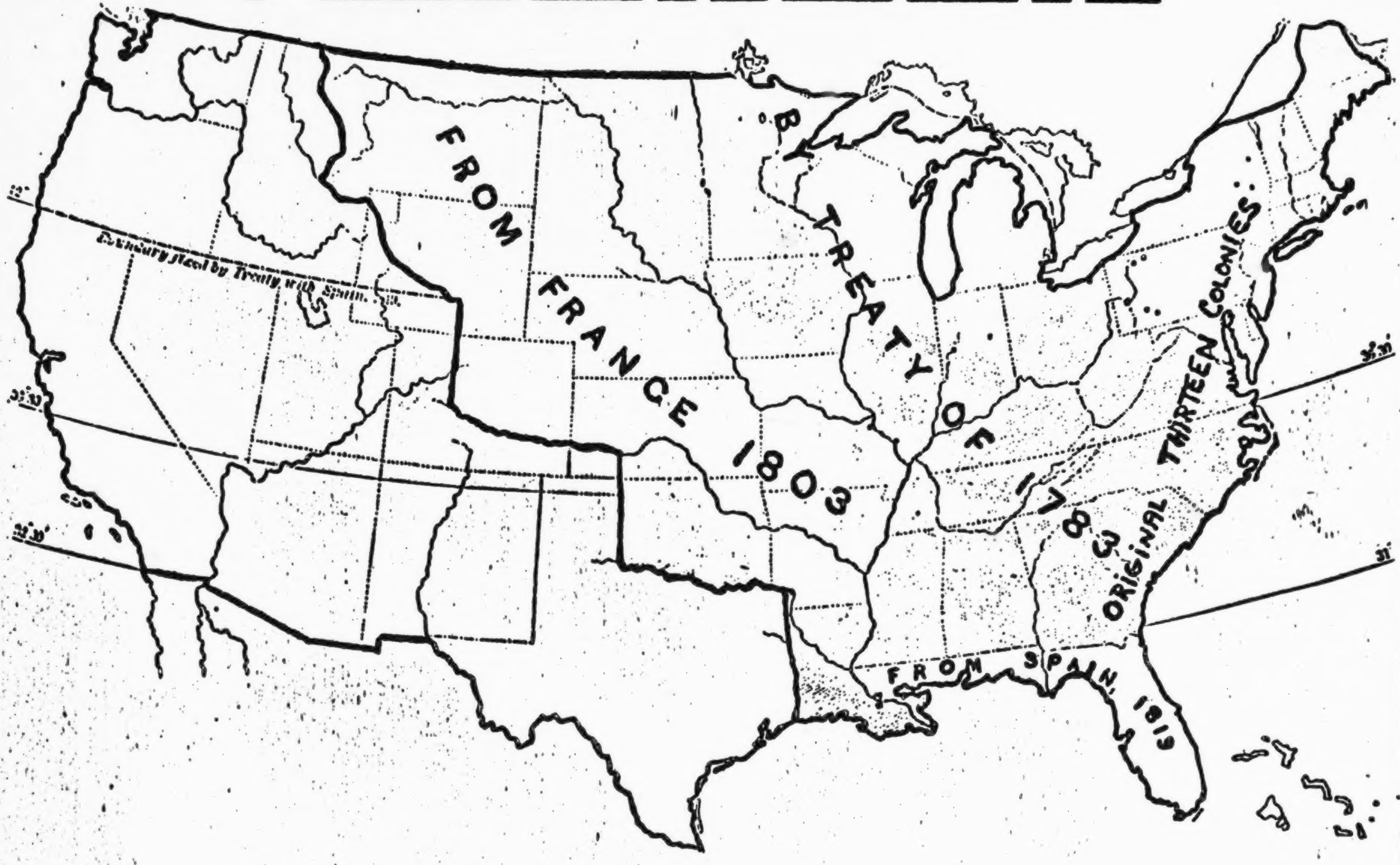
> [In an item dated July 7, 1846 Whitman stated that he loved to think about the future powers and extent of the United States, because "with its increase is the increase of human happiness and liberty." He scorned the idea of "miserable, inefficient Mexico" undertaking "the great mission of peopling the New World with a noble race."
>
> On December 2, 1947 Whitman expressed the thought that, as it was in the interest of mankind for the United States to extend its territory and power, the United States could claim lands by involving "a law superior to parchments and dry diplomatic rules," action which would be supported by future generations.]

---

[19] Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., 277.

[20] Cleveland Rodgers and John Black, ed., Walt Whitman, The Gathering of the Forces (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1920), 246-247, 266.

C. Territorial Growth of the United States to 1844 [21]


FROM FRANCE 1803
BY TREATY OF 1783
ORIGINAL THIRTEEN COLONIES
FROM SPAIN, 1819
Boundary fixed by Treaty with Spain, 1819
42°
36°30'
32°30'
31°

---

[21] William Cullen Bryant and Sydney Howard Gay, *A Popular History of the United States* (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1881), IV, 258.

SECTION II

THE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSE

The United States declared war on Mexico in May, 1846. Historians agree on this much. But what happened between the time of President Polk's inauguration and the declaration of war is the subject of much controversy.

This section presents the student of history with material to make up his own mind.

A. Chronology of Events

Chronology is important in this secion and you may want to refer back to this page from time to time.

1836 - March 1	Texas declares independence from Mexico
1837 - March 3	U. S. recognizes independence of Texas
1845 - February 28	Joint resolution of Congress authorizes annexation of Texas
March 4	James K. Polk inaugurated President
March 6	Government of Mexico breaks diplomatic relations with the United States.
May 28	Orders issued to General Taylor to cross into Texas and protect it pending formal annexation by United States
July 4	Texas accepts United States offer to join the Union
Sept. 16	Polk decides to send special representative, John Slidell, to Mexico
Nov. 10	Slidell commissioned envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Mexico
1846 - Jan. 12	Polk receives Slidell's dispatch that Mexican government is under heavy pressure not to receive him

1846 - Jan. 13	General Taylor ordered to advance into land disputed by Mexico and the United States and to take position on the east bank of Rio Grande
March 12	New government in Mexico refuses to see Slidell
April 25	U. S. soldiers at Rio Grande attacked by Mexican cavalry in the disputed area.
May 9	President's cabinet supports his decision to recommend to Congress a declaration of war against Mexico
4 hours later	News of April 25 Mexican attack reaches Polk in Washington
May 11	Polk tells Congress "She [Mexico] has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war."
May 12	House votes war, 174-14 Senate votes war, 40-2
May 13	President signs declaration of war
1848 - Feb. 2	Nicholas P. Trist negotiates Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo for the United States
Feb. 22	Polk sends Treaty to Senate
March 10	Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ratified by United States Senate, 38-15

B. The Goal

The following two documents evidence the goals of the Polk administration.

1. On March 4, 1845, in his Inaugural Address Polk declares:[1]

> The Republic of Texas has made known her desire to come into our Union, to form a part of our Confederacy and enjoy with us the blessings of liberty secured and guaranteed by our Constitution. . . .

---

[1] James D. Richardson, ed., *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, IV, 379-380, 382.

> I regard the question of annexation as belonging exclusively to the United States and Texas. They are independent powers competent to contract, and foreign nations have no right to interfere with them or to take exceptions to their reunion. Foreign powers do not seem to appreciate the true character of our Government. Our Union is a confederation of independent States, whose policy is peace with each other and all the world. To enlarge its limits is to extend the dominions of peace over additional territories and increasing millions. The world has nothing to fear from military ambition in our Government. While the Chief Magistrate and the popular branch of Congress are elected for short terms by the suffrages of those millions who must in their own persons bear all the burdens and miseries of war, our Government can not be otherwise than pacific. . . .
>
> As our population has expanded, the Union has been cemented and strengthened. As our boundaries have been enlarged and our agricultural population has been spread over a large surface, our federative system has acquired additional strength and security. It may well be doubted whether it would not be in greater danger of overthrow if our present population were confined to the comparatively narrow limits of the original thirteen States than it is now that they are sparsely settled over a more expanded territory. It is confidently believed that our system may be safely extended to the utmost bounds of our territorial limits, and that as it shall be extended the bonds of our Union, so far from being weakened, will become stronger. . . .
>
> In the management of our foreign relations it will be my aim to observe a careful respect for the rights of other nations, while our own will be the subject of constant watchfulness. Equal and exact justice should characterize all our intercourse with foreign countries. . . .

2. A short time later he stated privately to George Bancroft, his Secretary of the Navy:[2]

> "There are four great measures," said he [Polk] with emphasis, striking his thigh forcibly as he spoke, "which are to be the measures of my administration: one, a reduction of the tariff; another, the independent treasury; a third, the settlement of the Oregon boundary question; and, lastly, the acquisition of California."

---

[2] Letter of George Bancroft to James Schouler, February, 1887 in James Schouler, History of the United States (Dodd, Mead & Company, Publishers, New York, 1889), IV, 498.

C. Diplomacy Attempted

The following documents cover the period from the president's inauguration to his first annual message, a time span of nine months.

1. A few weeks after Polk's inauguration Secretary of State Buchanan, who was later himself to become President, wrote Dr. William S. Parrott, a sometime dentist who had resided in Mexico for several years:[3]

> [Buchanan asked Parrott to serve as a "confidential agent to Mexico," the object of his mission being to "reach" the President and other high officials of the Mexican government and make "every honorable effort" to convince them that it was to the true interest of Mexico to restore friendly relations with the United States.]

2. The next day Secretary of State Buchanan wrote Wilson Shannon, United States Minister to Mexico during the Tyler administration:[4]

> [Buchanan advised Shannon that Polk regretted Shannon's assumption of "the high responsibility of suspending all diplomatic intercourse with the Mexican Government without the previous authority of your own government." Buchanan pointed out that, "whilst the annexation of Texas . . . is finally and irreversibly determined," Polk's aim was to adjust all other disputes with Mexico on the "most fair and liberal terms." Noting the antipathy expressed by many Mexicans against Shannon, Buchanan observed that some other agent would be more likely to achieve Polk's aims.]

3. The War Department in May sent orders to General Zachary Taylor, another future president, who was at the time in command of United States forces in the southwest stationed at Fort Jessup in western Louisiana:[5]

---

[3] John Bassett Moore, ed., The Works of James Buchanan (J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, 1909), VI, 132-134.

[4] Ibid., 134-136.

[5] United States Congress, House of Representatives, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Document No. 196, 68-69.

[Confidential] War Department, May 28, 1845.

> Sir: I am directed by the President to cause the forces now under your command, and those which may be assigned to it, to be put into a position where they may most promptly and efficiently act in defence of Texas, in the event it shall become necessary or proper to employ them for that purpose. The information received by the executive of the United States warrants the belief that Texas will shortly accede to the terms of annexation. As soon as the Texan Congress shall have given its consent to annexation, and a convention shall assemble and accept the terms offered in the resolutions of Congress, Texas will then be regarded by the executive government here so far a part of the United States as to be entitled from this government to defence and protection from foreign invasion and Indian incursions. The troops under your command will be placed and kept in readiness to perform this duty. . . .
>
> Should the territories of Texas be invaded by a foreign power, and you shall receive certain intelligence through her functionaries of that fact, after her convention shall have acceded to the terms of annexation contained in the resolutions of the Congress of the United States, you will at once employ, in the most effective manner your judgment may dictate, the forces under your command, for the defence of these territories, and to expel the invaders. . . .
>
> Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
>
> WM. L. MARCY,
> Secretary of War.
>
> General Z. Taylor,
> Fort Jesup, Louisiana.

4. In June the Navy Department issued secret orders to Commodore John D. Sloat, who commanded the United States Pacific Squadron:[6]

United States Navy Department,
[Secret and Confidential] Washington, June 24, 1845.

> Sir: Your attention is still particularly directed to the present aspect of the relations between this country and Mexico. It is the earnest desire of the President to pursue the policy of peace; and he is anxious that you, and every part of your squadron, should be assiduously careful to avoid any act which could be construed as an act of aggression.

---

[6] Ibid., Executive Document No. 60, 231.

> Should Mexico, however, be resolutely bent on hostilities, you will be mindful to protect the persons and interests of citizens of the United States near your station; and, should you ascertain beyond a doubt that the Mexican government has declared war against us, you will at once employ the force under your command to the best advantage. The Mexican ports on the Pacific are said to be open and defenceless. If you ascertain with certainty that Mexico has declared war against the United States, you will at once possess yourself of the port of San Francisco, and blockade or occupy such other ports as your force may permit.
>
> Yet, even if you should find yourself called upon by the certainty of an express declaration of war against the United States to occupy San Francisco, and other Mexican ports, you will be careful to preserve, if possible, the most friendly relations with the inhabitants; and, where you can do so, you will encourage them to adopt a course of neutrality. . . .
>
> Very respectfully, your obedient servant,
>
> GEORGE BANCROFT
>
> Commodore John D. Sloat,
> Commanding United States naval forces in the Pacific.

5. William S. Parrott, sent by Polk to Mexico as his confidential agent, wrote to Secretary Buchanan:[7]

> [On August 26, 1845, Parrott advised Buchanan of a change in the climate of public opinion in Mexico. Not only was it probable that no additional forces would be sent to the frontier, but he noted a "publickly manifested" desire to receive a "commissioner" from the United States. He had "good reasons to believe" than an envoy might "with comparative care" settle "the most important national question."]

6. Polk recorded events in a Diary, often writing in the third person:[8]

> [In an entry dated September 11, 1845, Polk noted that dispatches from Dr. Parrott were read at a meeting of the Cabinet. The Cabinet unanimously decided that it was "expedient" to re-open diplomatic relations with Mexico, and it was agreed to appoint John Slidell of New Orleans to undertake this mission. Slidell was not to disclose his official character. One "great object" of his mission was to adjust a permanent boundary between Mexico and the United States. He was therefore instructed to buy upper California and New Mexico.]

---

[7] William Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence, VIII, 746-747.

[8] Milo M. Quaife, ed., The Diary of James K. Polk (A. C. McClure & Co., Chicago, 1910), I, 33-34.

7. Another entry in Polk's Diary:[9]

> [On Wednesday, September 17, 1845 Polk reported a special meeting of the Cabinet to consider items in New Orleans papers indicating that, as late as August 21, the President of Mexico had issued a circular to the army "breathing a war spirit." This suggested that Parrott might have been mistaken about Mexico's willingness to receive a Minister from the United States. Mr. Black, United States Consul in Mexico City, was authorized to ascertain officially whether such a Minister would be received.]

8. At the President's bidding, Secretary of State Buchanan wrote to John Black, United States Consul in Mexico City:[10]

> [Buchanan, at the instruction of President Polk instructed Black to ascertain from the Mexican government whether they would receive a United States envoy entrusted with full power to adjust all questions in dispute between the two governments.]

9. A month later the Secretary of State sent instructions to Thomas Larkin, United States Consul in the Mexican province of California:[11]

> [Buchanan stated that the destiny of California was "a subject of anxious solicitude" for the United States. While the United States could take no part in a contest between California and Mexico, should California "assert and maintain her independence," the United States would "render all the kind offices in our power, as a sister Republic." Buchanan emphasized that the United States did not want to extend its territory "unless by the free and spontaneous wish of the independent people of adjoining territories." Nevertheless, the United States would "vigorously interpose" to prevent California from falling under the control of any foreign power.
>
> Larkin was asked to keep the Department of State fully advised on the "progress of events" in California. He was also asked to provide detailed information on such subjects as: the proportion of Mexican, American, British, and French citizens and the feeling of each group towards the United States; the names and characters of public officials and in-

---

[9] Ibid., 35-36.

[10] John Bassett Moore, ed., The Works of James Buchanan, VI, 260-261.

[11] Ibid., 275, 277-278.

> fluential citizens; the location of principal American settlements, the rate at which settlers arrive, and from what portions of the United States they came.]

10. As instructed, Consul Black sounded out Mexican officials on their willingness to receive an American representative and reported to Secretary Buchanan in a dispatch received at the State Department on November 7:[12]

> Consulate of the U. S. of America,
> Mexico, October 17, 1845.
>
> On Saturday evening, the 11th instant, I obtained a confidential interview with the minister of foreign relations of the Mexican republic, in relation to the important charge which his excellency the President of the United States was pleased to confide to me, and am happy now to have it in my power to advise my government of a favorable result. . . .
>
> He said that the Mexican government, notwithstanding it felt itself very much aggrieved and offended by the acts of that of the United States, in relation to the affairs of Texas, yet it would appear to be out of place to express these feelings in a communication of this nature; and that, if the government had but itself to consult, the expression ofthese feelings would have been left out of the communication, as they only tend to irritate; but that I knew, as well as he did, that governments like ours must endeavor to reconcile the feelings and opinions of the people to their public acts; and that I also knew, very well, that a strong opposition were daily calling the attention of the public to, and scrutinizing and condemning every act of, the government, and that the government endeavored to give them as little pretext as possible; and, therefore, wished me to make this explanation to my government.
>
> And that, in relation to the qualities he had recommended to be possessed by the person to be sent out by the government of the United States for the settlement of existing differences, it was the wish of the Mexican government, and would be for the good of both countries, that a person suitable in every respect should be sent, endued with the necessary qualities, and not one against whom the government or people of Mexico should, unfortunately, entertain a fixed prejudice, which would be a great obstacle in the way to an amicable adjustment of differences. . . .

---

[12] United States Congress, House of Representatives, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Document 196, 9-10.

11. Black transmitted to Washington the official reply from the Minister of Foreign Relations of Mexico:[13]

> Mexico, October 15, 1845.
>
> Sir: I have informed my government of the private conference which took place between you and myself on the 11th instant, and have submitted to it the confidential letter which you, in consequence of, and aggreably to what was then said, addressed to me yesterday. In answer, I have to say to you, that although the Mexican nation is deeply injured by the United States, through the acts committed by them in the department of Texas, which belongs to this nation, my government is disposed to receive the commissioner of the United States who may come to this capital with full powers from his government to settle the present dispute in a peaceful, reasonable, and honorable manner. . . .
>
> What my government requires above all things is, that the mission of the commissioner of the United States, and his reception by us, should appear to be always absolutely frank, and free from every sign of menace or coercion. And thus, Mr. consul, while making known to your government the disposition on the part of that of Mexico to receive the commissioner, you should impress upon it, as indispensable, the previous recall of the whole naval force now lying in sight of our port of Vera Cruz. Its presence would degrade Mexico, while she is receiving the commissioner, and would justly subject the United States to the imputation of contradicting, by acts, the vehement desire of conciliation, peace, and friendship, which is professed and asserted by words.
>
> I have made known to you, Mr. consul, with the brevity which you desired, the disposition of my government, and in so doing, I have the satisfaction to assure you of my consideration and esteem for you personally.
>
> MANUEL DE LA PENA Y PENA
>
> To John Black, Esq.,
> *Consul of the United States at Mexico.*

---

[13] Ibid., 11-12.

12. Polk recorded the results of his conversation with William S. Parrott, his confidential agent, on the latter's return from Mexico:[14]

> [In the entry dated November 10, Polk commented that Parrott had confirmed his opinion that Mexico was eager to settle the outstanding disputes including the boundary question. Polk also noted that he signed Slidell's commission as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Mexico.]

13. John Slidell was the President's choice for the mission to Mexico. He received detailed instructions from the Secretary of State before he left:[15]

> [Buchanan stated that the first subject demanding Slidell's attention was claims made by American citizens on the Mexican government. As Mexico could not satisfy these claims by the payment of money, the annexation of Texas presented the means with which to satisfy the debt. Desiring that the boundary between Mexico and the United States be established in such a way as to preclude future disputes, Buchanan advocated including New Mexico in the limits of the United States. Slidell was authorized to offer twenty-five million dollars in addition to the assumption of the just claims against Mexico.]

14. In December the President reviewed the situation for the Congress and the nation in his first State of the Union message:[16]

> Washington, December 2, 1845.
>
> Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives:
>
> It is to me a source of unaffected satisfaction to meet the representatives of the States and the people in Congress assembled, as it will be to receive the aid of their combined wisdom in the administration of public affairs. In performing for the first time the duty imposed on me by the Constitution

---

[14] Milo M. Quaife, ed., The Diary of James K. Polk, I, 93.

[15] John Basset Moore, The Works of James Buchanan, VI, 299-300, 302-306.

[16] James D. Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers of the Presidents, IV, 385-388, 391-392.

of giving to you information of the state of the Union and recommending to your consideration such measures as in my judgment are necessary and expedient, I am happy that I can congratulate you on the continued prosperity of our country. Under the blessings of Divine Providence and the benign influence of our free institutions, it stands before the world a spectacle of national happiness. . . .

The terms of annexation which were offered by the United States having been accepted by Texas, the public faith of both parties is solemnly pledged to the compact of their union. Nothing remains to consummate the event but the passage of an act by Congress to admit the State of Texas into the Union upon an equal footing with the original States. Strong reasons exist why this should be done at an early period of the session. . . .

This accession to our territory has been a bloodless achievement. No arm of force has been raised to produce the result. The sword has had no part in the victory. We have not sought to extend our territorial possessions by conquest, or our republican institutions over a reluctant people. . . . The jurisdiction of the United States, which at the formation of the Federal Constitution was bounded by the St. Marys on the Atlantic, has passed the capes of Florida and been peacefully extended to the Del Norte. . . .

I regret to inform you that our relations with Mexico since your last session have not been of the amicable character which it is our desire to cultivate with all foreign nations. On the 6th day of March last the Mexican envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to the United States made a formal protest in the name of his Government against the joint resolution passed by Congress "for the annexation of Texas to the United States," which he chose to regard as a violation of the rights of Mexico, and in consequence of it he demanded his passports. . . .

Since that time Mexico has until recently occupied an attitude of hostility toward the United States--has been marshaling and organizing armies, issuing proclamations, and avowing the intention to make war on the United States, either by an open declaration or by invading Texas. . . . Our Army was ordered to take position in the country between the Nueces and the Del Norte, and to repel any invasion of the Texan territory. . . .

After our Army and Navy had remained on the frontier and coasts of Mexico for many weeks without any hostile movement on her part, though her menaces continued, I deemed it important to put an end, if possible, to this state of things. With this view I caused steps to be taken in the month of September last to ascertain distinctly and in an authentic

> form what the designs of the Mexican Government were--whether it was their intention to declare war, or invade Texas, or whether they were disposed to adjust and settle in an amicable manner the pending differences between the two countries. On the 9th of November an official answer was received that the Mexican Government consented to renew the diplomatic relations which had been suspended in March last, and for that purpose were willing to acredit a minister from the United States. With a sincere desire to preserve peace and restore relations of good understanding between the two Republics, I waived all ceremony as to the manner of renewing diplomatic intercourse between them, and, assuming the initiative, on the 10th of November a distinguished citizen of Louisiana was appointed envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary to Mexico, clothed with full powers to adjust and definitively settle all pending differences between the two countries, including those of boundary between Mexico and the State of Texas. The minister appointed has set out on his mission and is probably by this time near the Mexican capital. He has been instructed to bring the negotiation with which he is charged to a conclusion at the earliest practicable period, which it is expected will be in time to enable me to communicate the result to Congress during the present session. . . .

D. Diplomacy Ends and Hostilities Begin

The documents in this part trace developments to the outbreak of hostilities between Mexico and the United States.

1. A few days after he arrived in Mexico Slidell informed Buchanan as to the progress of his mission. The dispatch was received at the State Department on January 12, 1846:[17]

> Legation of the United States of America,
> Mexico, December 17, 1845.
>
> On Monday the 8th instant, I addressed to the minister of foreign affairs a note, in the usual form, announcing my arrival in the capital, accompanying it with a copy of my letter of credence and your official communication to the minister of

---

[17] United States Congress, House of Representatives, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Document No. 196, 18-19, 21.

foreign affairs, and asking to be informed when and where I should be admitted to present my credentials to the President. Of this note I annex a copy. It was handed to Mr. Black to the minister, who assured him that I should have an answer on the following Wednesday; and requested him to call and receive it. On that day, however, Mr. Black received a note from the secretary of the minister, stating that it was necessary to submit the matter to the council of government, and that he would be advised when the answer would be given. . . .

This at least is certain, the administration, in referring a matter entirely within their own competence to a body whose decision they cannot control, and upon whose sympathies they cannot rely, manifest either a weakness or a bad faith, which renders the prospect of any favorable issue to negotiations with them at best very problematical.

The deliberations of the council, although ostensibly confidential, soon became known out of doors. It has been twice or thrice convoked for the purpose of deliberating upon my reception, and it is perfectly well known that it has advised against it. The most absurd reasons have there been advanced against my recognition, so absured, indeed, that they would appear scarcely credible to any one not upon the spot.

The objections started were, that my credentials did not appear to have beengiven with the sanction of Congress, that my appointment had not been confirmed by the Senate, that this government had agreed only to receive a commissioner, and that, consequently, the appointment of an envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary was not in accordance with the letter of the 15th October from the minister of foreign affairs to Mr. Black. That this letter only contemplated negotiations upon the subject of Texas and finally, to cap the climax of absurdity, that my powers were not sufficient. . . .

I send you files of the three principal papers published here, viz: the Diario, Siglo, and Amigo del Pueblo, which will enable you to form some idea of the state of public opinion as indicated by the press. The first is the official government paper: it has not made the slightest allusion to my arrival, and preserves upon all other debatable subjects a silence equally oracular. The second, although it has had a sort of semi-official character, and had heretofore supported the administration, has recently commented very freely upon its feebleness and inefficiency. The third is the leading opposition journal; it breathes the fiercest hostility against the United States, denounces the proposed negotiation as treason; and, in the last number, openly calls upon the troops and the people to put down the government by force. . . .

2. A few days later Slidell transmitted the official statement of the Mexican government refusing to receive him:[18]

> Palace of the National Government
> Mexico, December 20, 1845.
>
> The undersigned, minister of foreign relations and government of the Mexican republic, had the honor to receive the note which Mr. John Slidell was pleased to address to him on the 8th instant, making known his arrival at this capital, in the character of envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the United States of America, near the government of the undersigned, and requesting that a time and a place should be appointed for his admission to present his credentials, of which he was pleased to send copies enclosed.
>
> The undersigned, having submitted the whole to his excellency the President of the republic, and having also considered attentively the note addressed to him by the Secretary of State of the United States, relative to the mission of Mr. Slidell, regrets to inform him that, although the supreme government of the republic is animated by the pacific and conciliatory intentions which the undersigned manifested to the consul of the United States in his confidential note of the 14th of October last, it does not conceive that, in order to fulfil the object proposed by the said consul, in the name of the American government, and accepted by the undersigned, it should admit his excellency Mr. Slidell in the character with which he is invested, of envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary residing in the republic. . . .
>
> The proposition in question emanated spontaneously from the government of the United States, and the Mexican government accepted it, . . . its acceptance, rested upon the precise and definite understanding that the commissioner should be *ad hoc*--that is to say, commissioned to settle, in a peaceful and honorable manner, the questions relative to Texas. This has not been done, as Mr. Slidell does not come invested with that character, but with the absolute and general functions of an envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary, to reside in this quality, near the Mexican government. . . .
>
> The admission of such a minister should be, as the undersigned has already said, preceded by the agreement which the United States proposes to enter into for the establishment of peace and good correspondence with Mexico, interrupted by the occurrences of Texas--this point being, from its very nature, necessary to be attained before any other; and until

---

[18] *Ibid.*, 30-32.

> it shall have been entirely and peacefully settled, not even an appointment should be made of a resident minister by either of the two governments.
>
> The supreme government of Mexico, therefore, cannot admit his excellency Mr. Slidell to the exercise of the functions of the mission conferred on him by the United States government. But as the sentiments expressed by the undersigned to the consul, in his above mentioned communication of the 14th of October last, are in no wise changed, he now repeats them; adding, that he will have the utmost pleasure in treating with Mr. Slidell, so soon as he shall have presented credentials authorizing him expressly and exclusively to settle the questions which have disturbed the harmony and' good understanding between the two republics, and which will bring on war between them unless such settlement be effected in a satisfactory manner, to which the proposition from the government of the United States related, and under the express understanding of which that proposition was accepted by the Mexican government. Until this be done, Mr. Slidell cannot be admitted in the character with which he appears invested, as the honor, the dignity, and the interests of the Mexican republic would thereby be placed in jeopardy. . . .
>
> MANUEL DE LA PENA Y PENA
>
> To his Excellency John Slidell.

3. Black also reported to Secretary Buchanan on the refusal of the Mexican authorities to receive Slidell. Black's dispatch was received in Washington along with Slidell's on January 12:[19]

> Consulate of the United States of America
> Mexico, December 18, 1845.
>
> On Wednesday, the 3d instant, I received a letter from our consul at Vera Cruz, dated the 29th of November, informing me that a vessel had just arrived at Sacrificios, on board of which was the Hon. John Slidell. . . .
>
> On the receipt of this letter I called at the Foreign Department of this government, to see the minister of foreign affairs, and was informed by Mr. Monasterio, the chief clerk, that the minister was up stairs with the President, and that he was going up to see him, and would advise him of my wish. He soon returned, and requested me to go up, as the minister wished to see me. I went up to the President's quarters, when the minister came out into the ante-chamber and met me, and accosted me saying that the government was informed that

---

[19] Ibid., 17-18.

> there was an arrival at Vera Cruz from the United States, bringing out a commissioner, by which the government was taken by surprise, and asked me who could this commissioner be, and what had he come for? I told him I did not know, but I presumed it was the envoy which the Mexican government had agreed to receive from the government of the United States. . . . He said that ought not to be; the government did not expect an envoy from the United States until January, as they were not prepared to receive him; and he desired, if possible, that he would not come to the capital, nor even disembark at this time, and that I should endeavor to prevent his doing so, as his appearance in the capital at this time might prove destructive to the government, and thus defeat the whole affair. You know the opposition are calling us traitors, for entering into this arrangement with you. I told him I regretted this had not been known in time, as the envoy would be now on his way to this capital, and that the Mexican government had set no time for his arrival, and it was to be presumed that they would be ready to receive him whenever he arrived. I know, he said, there was no time set; but from the conversations which I have had with yourself, and what I have heard from others, I had good reason to believe that the envoy would not have been appointed by your government, or, at least, not have started on his mission, until after the meeting of Congress; which, he said, he understood would not meet until the first of this month.
>
> He said that the government itself was well disposed, and ready to proceed in the negotiation, but that if the affair was commenced now, it would endanger its existence; that the government were preparing the thing, collecting the opinion and consent of the departments, which they expected to have finished by January, and then they would be able to proceed in the affair with more security; that the government were afraid that the appearance of the envoy at this time would produce a revolution against it, which might terminate in its destruction.

4. The following day, January 13, the War Department issued orders to General Taylor who was then stationed at Corpus Christi on the Nueces:[20]

> War Department,
> Washington, January 13, 1846.
>
> Sir: I am directed by the President to instruct you to advance and occupy, with the troops under your command, positions on or near the east bank of the Rio del Norte, [Rio Grande] as soon as it can be conveniently done with reference to the season and the routes by which your movements must be made. . . .

---

[20] Ibid., 77-78.

> In the positions you may take in carrying out these instructions and other movements that may be made, the use of the Rio del Norte may be very convenient, if not necessary. Should you attempt to exercise the right which the United States have in common with Mexico to the free navigation of this river, it is probable that Mexico would interpose resistance. You will not attempt to enforce this right without further instructions. . . .
>
> It is not designed, in our present relations with Mexico, that you should treat her as an enemy; but, should she assume that character by a declaration of war, or any open act of hostility towards us, you will not act merely on the defensive, if your relative means enable you to do otherwise. . . .
>
> WM. L. MARCY,
> Secretary of War.
>
> Brigadier General Z. Taylor.

5. The same day that the War Department issued orders to General Taylor, Polk wrote in his Diary:[21]

> [The short entry for January 13 noted that at a meeting of the cabinet dispatches from Mexico were read and considered as well as some "other public matters not important." Polk also mentioned attending a dinner party that evening.]

6. With a change in the government of Mexico, Slidell once again attempted to arrange a meeting. He reported to Secretary Buchanan in a dispatch received in Washington on April 7:[22]

> Legation of the United States of America
> Jalopa, March 18, 1846.
>
> On the 15th instant I received from the minister of foreign relations a reply to my communication of the 1st instant, of which you have already been advised.
>
> It is a peremptory refusal to receive me in the capacity of envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary. I have consequently, in conformity with your instructions, applied for my passports, and, so soon as they are received, I shall proceed to Vera Cruz, there to embark for New Orleans. I

---

[21] Milo M. Quaife, ed., The Diary of James K. Polk, I, 164.

[22] United States Congress, House of Representatives, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., Executive Document No. 196, 56-57.

> send you copies of the note of the minister of foreign relations, and of my reply. . . .
>
> As to any changes of rulers in Mexico, I look upon them as a matter of great indifference. We shall never be able to treat with her on fair terms until she has been taught to respect us. It certainly was proper to place us in the strongest moral position before our own people and the world, by exhausting every possible means of conciliation; but here all amicable advances are considered as indicative either of weakness or treachery. . . .

7. Along with this letter, Slidell transmitted the official note of refusal from the new Minister of Foreign Relations:[23]

National Palace, Mexico, March 12, 1846.

> The undersigned, minister of foreign relations and government of the republic, has the honor to acknowledge receipt of the note addressed to him from Jalapa, under date of the 1st instant, by his excellency John Slidell, appointed minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary of the United States of America. . . .
>
> The vehement desire of the government of the United States to extend its already immense territory at the expense of that of Mexico, has been manifest for many years. . . .
>
> Civilized nations have beheld with amazement, at this enlightened and refined epoch, a powerful and well-consolidated State, availing itself of the internal dissentions of a neighboring nation, putting its vigilance to sleep by protestations of friendship, setting in action all manner of springs and artifices, alternately plying intrigue and violence, and seizing a moment to despoil her of a precious part of her territory, regardless of the incontrovertible rights of the most unquestionable ownership, and the most uninterrupted possession.
>
> Here, then, is the true position of the Mexican republic: despoiled, outraged, contemned, it is now attempted to subject her to a humiliating degradation. The sentiment of her own dignity will not allow her to consent to such ignominy. . . .
>
> If it was really and positively desired to tie up again the bonds of good understanding and friendship between the two nations, the way was very easy: the Mexican government offered to admit the plenipotentiary or commissioner who

---

[23] *Ibid.*, 57-61.

> should come clothed with special powers to treat upon the question of Texas. . . .
>
> It follows that, if war should finally become inevitable, and if in consequence of this war the peace of the civilized world should be disturbed, the responsibility will not fall upon Mexico. It will all rest upon the United States; to them will the whole of it belong. . . .
>
> J. M. DE CASTILLO Y LANZAS.
>
> His Excellency John Slidell.

8. In April General Taylor received the following note from his Mexican counterpart:[24]

> Fourth Military Division,)
> General-in-Chief)
>
> Your government, in an incredible manner--you will even permit me to say an extravagant one, if the usage or general rules established and received among all civilized nations are regarded--has not only insulted, but has exasperated the Mexican nation, bearing its conquering banner to the left bank of the Rio Bravo del Norte; and in this case, by explicit and definitive orders of my government, which neither can, will nor should receive new outrages, I require you in all form, and at latest in the peremptory term of twenty-four hours, to break up your camp and retire to the other bank of the Nueces River, while our governments are regulating the pending question in relation to Texas. If you insist in remaining upon the soil of the department of Tamaulipas, it will clearly result that arms, and arms, alone, must decide the question; and in that case I advise you that we accept the war to which, with so much injustice on your part, you provoke us, and that, on our part, this war shall be conducted conformably to the principles established by the most civilized nations; that is to say, that the law of the nations and of war shall be the guide of my operations; trusting that on your part the same will be observed.
>
> With this in view, I tender you the considerations due to your person and respectable office.

---

[24] *Ibid.*, 123.

God and Liberty!

Headquarters at Matamoras, 2 o'clock P. M., April 12, 1846.

PEDRO DE AMPUDIA.

Senor General-in-Chief of the United States Army,
Don Z. Taylor.

9. On April 26 General Taylor reported to Washington:[25]

Headquarters Army of Occupation,
Camp near Matamoras, Texas,
April 26, 1846.

Sir: I have respectfully to report that General Arista arrived in Matamoras on the 24th inst., and assumed the chief command of the Mexican troops. On the same day he addressed me a communication, conceived in courteous terms, but saying that he considered hostilities commenced, and should prosecute them. A translation of his note, and a copy of my reply, will be transmitted the moment they can be prepared. I dispatch this by an express which is now waiting.

I regret to report that a party of dragoons, sent out by me on the 24th inst., to watch the course of the river above on this bank, became engaged with a very large force of the enemy, and after a short affair, in which some sixteen were killed and wounded, appear to have been surrounded and compelled to surrender. Not one of the party has returned, except a wounded man sent in this morning by the Mexican commander, so that I cannot report with confidence the particulars of the engagement, or the fate of the officers, except that Capt. Hardee was known to be a prisoner, and unhurt. The party was 63 strong.

Hostilities may now be considered as commenced. . . .

I am, sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

Z. TAYLOR,
Brevet Brig. Gen. U. S. A., commanding.

The Adjutant General of the Army,
Washington, D. C.

10. Polk had not yet received General Taylor's dispatch when he wrote in his Diary:[26]

[The entry for May 5, 1846, noted that the cabinet had met and considered several "matters of minor importance."

---

[25] *Ibid.*, 123-124.

[26] Milo M. Quaife, ed., *The Diary of James K. Polk*, I, 379.

> The cabinet discussed "our Mexican difficulties, the condition of our army . . . , and the possibility of a collision between the American and Mexican forces. . . ." Lacking recent information from General Taylor, however, action was post-poned.]

11. Polk's May 9 entry in his Diary recounts the developments that took place on that day:[27]

> [The entry for May 9, 1848, noted that at a regular meeting of the cabinet the Mexican question was considered. There was unanimous agreement that, if Mexican forces committed any act of aggression against General Taylor's forces, Polk should immediately send a message to Congress recommending an immediate declaration of war. At 6 P. M. Polk received dispatches from General Taylor reporting that the Mexican army had crossed the Rio Grande and attacked Taylor's army, killing and capturing two companies of dragoons. A cabinet meeting was called for 7:30, at which time it was unanimously agreed that a message should be sent to Congress recommending the adoption of "prompt and vigorous" measures which would enable the President to prosecute the war.]

12. President Polk's message to Congress:[28]

> Washington, May 11, 1846.
>
> *To the Senate and House of Representatives*:
>
> The existing state of the relations between the United States and Mexico renders it proper that I should bring the subject to the consideration of Congress. . . .
>
> The strong desire to establish peace with Mexico on liberal and honorable terms, and the readiness of this Government to regulate and adjust our boundary and other causes of difference with that power on such fair and equitable principles as would lead to permanent relations of the most friendly nature, induced me in September last to seek the reopening of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Every measure adopted on our part had for its object the furtherance of these desired results. . . . An envoy of the United States repaired to Mexico with full powers to adjust every existing difference. But though present on the Mexican soil by agreement between the two Governments, invested with full powers, and bearing evidence of the most friendly dispositions, his mission has been unavailing. The Mexican Government not only refused to receive him or listen to his propositions, but after a long-continued series of menaces

---

[27] *Ibid.*, 384-387.

[28] James D. Richardson, ed., *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, IV, 437-443.

> have at last invaded our territory and shed the blood of our fellow-citizens on our own soil. . . .
>
> On the 10th of November, 1845, Mr. John Slidell of Louisiana, was commissioned by me as an envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary of the United States to Mexico, and was intrusted with full powers to adjust both the questions of the Texas boundary and of indemnification to our citizens. The redress of the wrongs of our citizens naturally and inseparably blended itself with the question of boundary. The settlement of the one question in any correct view of the subject involves that of the other. I could not for a moment entertain the idea that the claims of our much-injured and long-suffering citizens, many of which had existed for more than twenty years, should be postponed or separated from the settlement of the boundary question.
>
> Mr. Slidell arrived at Vera Cruz on the 30th of November, and was courteously received by the authorities of that city. But the Government of General Herrera was then tottering to its fall. The revolutionary party had seized upon the Texas question to effect or hasten its overthrow. Its determination to restore friendly relations with the United States, and to receive our minister to negotiate for the settlement of this question, was violently assailed, and was made the great theme of denunciation against it. The Government of General Herrera, there is good reason to believe, was sincerely desirous to receive our minister; but it yielded to the storm raised by its enemies, and on the 21st of December refused to accredit Mr. Slidell upon the most frivolous pretexts. . . .
>
> Five days after the date of Mr. Slidell's note General Herrera yielded the Government to General Paredes without a struggle, and on the 30th of December resigned the Presidency. This revolution was accomplished solely by the army, the people having taken little part in the contest; and thus the supreme power in Mexico passed into the hands of a military leader. . . .
>
> Under these circumstances, Mr. Slidell, in obedience to my direction, addressed a note to the Mexican minister of foreign relations, under date of the 1st of March last, asking to be received by that Government in the diplomatic character to which he had been appointed. This minister in his reply, under date of the 12th of March, reiterated the arguments of his predecessor, and in terms that may be considered as giving just grounds of offense to the Government and people of the United States denied the application of Mr. Slidell. Nothing therefore remained for our envoy but to demand his passports and return to his own country.

> Thus the Government of Mexico, though solemnly pledged by official acts in October last to receive and accredit an American envoy, violated their plighted faith and refused the offer of a peaceful adjustment of our difficulties. Not only was the offer rejected, but the indignity of its rejection was enhanced by the manifest breach of faith in refusing to admit the envoy who came because they had bound themselves to receive him. . . .
>
> The grievous wrongs perpetrated by Mexico upon our citizens throughout a long period of years remain unredressed, and solemn treaties pledging her public faith for this redress have been disregarded. A government either unable or unwilling to enforce the execution of such treaties fails to perform one of its plainest duties.
>
> Our commerce with Mexico has been almost annihilated. It was formerly highly beneficial to both nations, but our merchants have been deterred from prosecuting it by the system of outrage and extortion which the Mexican authorities have pursued against them, whilst their appeals through their own Government for indemnity have been made in vain. Our forbearance has gone to such an extreme as to be mistaken in its character. Had we acted with vigor in repelling the insults and redressing the injuries inflicted by Mexico at the commencement, we should doubtless have escaped all the difficulties in which we are now involved.
>
> Instead of this, however, we have been exerting our best efforts to propitiate her good will. Upon the pretext that Texas, a nation as independent as herself, thought proper to unite its destinies with our own, she has affected to believe that we have severed her rightful territory, and in official proclamations and manifestoes has repeatedly threatened to make war upon us for the purpose of reconquering Texas. In the meantime we have tried every effort at reconciliation. The cup of forbearance had been exhausted even before the recent information from the frontier of the Del Norte. But now, after reiterated menaces, Mexico has passed the boundary of the United States, has invaded our territory and shed American blood upon American soil. She has proclaimed that hostilities have commenced, and that the two nations are now at war.
>
> As war exists, and, notwithstanding all our efforts to avoid it, exists by the act of Mexico herself, we are called upon by every consideration of duty and patriotism to vindicate with decision the honor, the rights, and the interests of our country. . . .
>
> I invoke the prompt action of Congress to recognize the existence of the war, and to place at the disposition of the Executive the means of prosecuting the war with vigor, and thus hastening the restoration of peace. . . .
>
> JAMES K. POLK.

13. Another entry in Polk's Diary reports a Cabinet meeting held the same day the President signed the declaration of war:[29]

> [The entry for May 13, 1846, noted Polk's signing of the declaration of war. An evening meeting of the Cabinet considered a dispatch drafted by Buchanan informing other governments, inter alia, that the United States had not gone to war with a view towards acquiring California, New Mexico or any other portion of Mexican territory. Polk vigorously opposed this statement, maintaining that before he would make any such pledge he would "meet the war which either England or France or all the Powers of Christendom might wage. . . ." The offending paragraphs were struck from the dispatches.]

14. Benjamin Green had served the Tyler administration in 1844 as Secretary of the Legation at Mexico. Many years after the Mexican War Green recalled a conversation with President Polk and Secretary Buchanan concerning the sending of a United States representative to Mexico:[30]

> Dalton, Georgia, 8 Aug., 1889.
>
> Mr. Polk was inaugurated and almost simultaneously Santa Anna was deposed and banished. Herrera became President of Mexico, with Gen'l Arista and other peace men in his cabinet. Mr. J. D. Marks, for a long time U. S. consul at Matamoras, was an intimate friend and "compadre" of Gen'l Arista. As soon as installed, the Herrera administration sent Mr. Marks to Washington City, to make known, through me, to the Polk administration their desire to settle all questions, including that of boundaries, peaceably by treaty as had been suggested by the Tyler administration, and their willingness to cede New Mexico and California; but that they doubted their ability to sustain themselves in power against Santa Anna and the war party, as if nothing had happened. If the U. S. Government would send a special commission of two or more of their most distinguished men, they could keep down the war feeling, reconcile their people to the reception of such an extraordinary commission, and soon prepare them to expect and accept the solution desired by both governments.

---

[29] Milo M. Quaife, ed., The Diary of James K. Polk, I, 395-399.

[30] Lyon G. Tyler, The Letters and Times of the Tylers (Williamsburg, Virginia, 1896), III, 176-177.

All this was explained to Mr. Polk and Mr. Buchanan by me and Mr. Marks, and they fully understood that, while the Herrera administration would receive an extraordinary commission, they could not venture to receive any one with nothing more than the usual credentials of an ordinary Minister Resident, to soothe the dignity of the Mexican people, offended by the annexation of Texas.

For some reason the request for an extraordinary commission was refused, and it was decided to send Mr. Slidell to Mexico as an ordinary Minister Resident. Why, I can't say. I only know that it was known in Washington, before Mr. Slidell's commission was made out, that he would not be received. I do not know what influences led the Polk administration to turn the cold shoulder on our friends, Herrera and the Peace party, and to aid in bringing back Santa Anna, the acknowledged head of the war party. I thought then and think now that it was a great mistake.

SECTION III

CONGRESS DEBATES A DECLARATION OF WAR

The House of Representatives quickly responded to the President's May 11 message by passing a declaration of war on the same day. The vote was 174 to 14.

In the Senate, however, a spirited two day debate took place. On May 12 the Senate voted 40 to 2 that "by the act of the republic of Mexico a state of war exists between that Government and the United States."[1]

This section contains portions of the debate in the Senate as reported in The Congressional Globe.

It should be remembered that the Constitution (Article I, Section 8) gives to Congress alone the power to declare war. On the other hand the President is designated (Article II, Section 2) as the "commander-in-chief of the army and navy of the United States." As Chief Executive he also directs the day to day foreign policy of the United States.

---

[1] The Congressional Globe, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., 795.

THE CONGRESSIONAL GLOBE.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT THE CITY OF WASHINGTON, BY BLAIR & RIVES.

29TH CONGRESS, 1ST SESSION.

May 11, 1846[2]

Mr. CALHOUN [Dem., South Carolina] said: The question now submitted to us is one of the gravest character, and the importance of the consequences which may result from it we cannot now determine. I do hope that this body will give to it that high, full, and dispassionate consideration which is worthy the character of the body and the high constitutional functions which it is called on to exercise. I trust that we will weigh everyghing calmly and deliberately, and do all that the Constitution, interests, and honor of the country may require. . . .

Whilst I am up, I take occasion to say, that I agree with the Senator from Ohio, [Mr. Allen,] that the President has announced that there is war; but according to my interpretation, there is no war according to the sense of our Constitution. I distinguish between hostilities and war, and God forbid that, acting under the Constitution, we should ever confound one with the other. There may be invasion without war, and the President is authorized to repel invasion without war. But it is our sacred duty to make war, and it is for us to determine whether war shall be declared or not. If we have declared war, a state of war exists, and not till then. . . .

Mr. CASS [Dem., Michigan] said: I have but a few words to say. . . . I know of no intermediate state between peace and war. Are you at peace with Mexico? Are we at this moment at peace with Mexico? It is a state of war. . .... I for one wish to be distinctly understood, that whether war be declared or not, we are now in a position in which all the legitimate rights and consequences of war exist. We are placed in a solemn position. This is a most important crisis. But if we advance to our duty with firmness, promptitude, and decision, our course is plain and honorable, before the world. If we do not act in that spirit--if we make half war and half peace--if we say to Mexico, "Advance, and we'll fight you; if not, we will remain quiet," we will dishonor ourselves forever in the eyes of mankind. What have we to gain by such conduct? The advantage is altogether on the side of Mexico. She keeps up an army, and can invade us when she pleases. There is but one course for us to take. Push an expedition into Mexico, till we compel her to make peace--not to hold the country; but compel her to make such a peace as we have a right to demand.

Mr. MOREHEAD [Whig, Kentucky] said: It is well known to us all that the power to declare war belongs exclusively to the Congress of the United States. The President of the United States has no constitutional power to involve the nation in war. But if war does exist at this time between the United and Mexico, it may follow that the President of the United States may involve the country in war without the assent of the legislative department of the Government. I can very well conceive a case--and I trust that the allusion I am about to make will not be regarded as having any reference to the present circumstances--I can very well conceive a case, in which the army of the United States might be directed to assume a position in the territory of Mexico--such a hostile position--as to demand from the Mexican Government that she should repel such an invasion of her territory--an invasion made by the President of the United States. Suppose she did repel such invasion, and hostilities arose between this Government and that of Mexico, would that be war according to the Constitution of the United States? Now, I hold that it is competent alone for Congress to declare when war does exist between this Government and any other nation. In this view of the case, I do not think that there does exist, at this moment, war between the two nations, in the constitutional sense; and I think that there is a very essential difference between the existence of hostilities, as such, and actual war. There was a period in the history of the Government, which it occurs to me to point out, when that distinction was practically carried out. It was a period in the history of the Government when hostile relations subsisted between the French Republic and ours. There were aggressions committed upon the high seas upon our commerce. . . . It was, however, a state of hostility, which made it necessary for the Congress of the United States to adopt various measures authorizing the Executive to repel aggression on the part of France. I will not detain the Senate. I hope the distinction will be seen clearly enough, and that the Senate will insist on the recognition of that distinction. . . .

---

[2] Ibid., 783-788.

Mr. DAVIS [Whig, Mass.] said: For one, I am right willing to give my support to the national dignity and honor, and to repel an invasion of this territory, by giving to the President all suitable means for that purpose. Yet we have a right, and it is our duty to know whether the territory of this country has been invaded. That's the question to be considered here and to be discussed here; and I confess, for one, that some portions of the message--which I shall not attempt to characterize till I see it in print--some portions of the message strike me with a considerable degree of surprise. We are told in that document that the blood of American citizens has been spilt on our soil. This may be so. It may be true. But in the same message we are told that there is a question of boundary between us and Mexico, and an unsettled question; and that the Minister was sent there from her for the purpose of negotiating that very question. . . .

2

Mr. J. M. CLAYTON [Whig, Delaware] said: The President of the United States has ordered the army to take up a position on the left bank of the Rio Grande; and in obedience to instructions from the Executive, the general commanding has taken up a position in front of the town of Matamoras. I understand, and there is no dispute about the fact, that the general who established his camp there, has a battery of eighteen-pounders pointing at the town, and that the Rio Grande has in fact been blockaded, so as to exclude supplies from the Mexican forces. It is well known that this was done without consulting the Senate of the United States, and, so far as I understand, without even communicating the movements of the army to the Committee on Military Affairs, or any other committee of this body. Before I proceed further, I wish to put one question to the chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, [Mr. Benton.] I desire to know whether, on any former occasion during this session, any information has been received by that committee, from which he could form an opinion of the motives or objects of the Executive in sending an army to that place? . . .

Mr. BENTON [Dem., Missouri] answered that nothing more was known to him, as chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs, than was in the possession of every other Senator. All the knowledge he had on the subject was derived from the documents before the Senate.

Mr. CLAYTON proceeded:. . . If the acts of the Executive do not amount to acts of war, they are acts which necessarily tended to provoke war, and to bring on war, and that without consulting Congress or the constitutional advisers of the Executive of the United States. . . .I do not see on what principle it can be shown that the President, without consulting Congress and obtaining its sanction for the procedure had a right to send an army to take up a position, where, as it must have been foreseen, the inevitable consequence would be war. . . .

Mr. SEVIER [Dem., Arkansas] rejoined: One word of reply to the Senator from Delaware, and a very brief reply indeed is all that is required. He seems to express some surprise that an army should be sent to the Rio del Norte. I need not tell him that the army of the United States is always moved from one point to another in the United States without asking Congress. We have a Commander-in-Chief, a Secretary of War, and a President, who always decide on the proper disposition of the army. We have admitted Texas into the Union. Its frontier was threatened with invasion, and the Legislature and Executive of the State called on our aid. Was it then necessary to pass an act of Congress before any portion of the army could be sent on that service? . . .

Mr. CLAYTON continued: . . .The question is, Was it proper? was it right? The honorable Senator from Arkansas said that it was proper for the defence of the frontier of Texas, and necessary for the defence of Texas. Let us look at that for a moment. Was it necessary to take up a position on the left bank of the Del Norte? Was not the former position at Corpus Christi quite sufficient? Why was it necessary to cross the desert, and take up a position immediately in front of the friendly town of Matamoras? Why was it necessary to take up that position, with the batteries pointed against the town at a distance of not more than five hundred yards from its environs? It was an aggressive act; an act which the civilized world will so designate. . . .

Mr. ALLEN [Dem., Ohio] arose and said . . . Why, when the very first announcement of an invasion is made, it was thundered forth that the United States Government was in the wrong--that we were the aggressors. That might be wise in the judgment of Senators on the other side; but he (Mr. A) believed on second reflection, not one would be found to say it was not unwise. . . .

Mr. SEVIER [Dem., Arkansas] observed that Americans were certainly a very unfortunate people. He never knew them to be right in the whole course of his life. They were wrong, five years ago, in the case of France; wrong, lately, with Great Britain; wrong in the Black Hawk war; . . . and now, wrong again with Mexico. He had hoped to see his country right once in his life, but he was to be disappointed. This country had endured more from Mexico than any civilized Power ever stood from another. This country had reared her up, fostered her, protected her, as it had the republics of South America. Was she a republic to-day? How long had she been a republic? How long since she had an emperor on her throne? With every disposition to be lenient, there was a limit to insult from one country to another. Mexico made war upon the United States when they were endeavoring, long before crossing the Nueces, to negotiate. Troops were not placed there till all attempts to negotiate had failed. . . .

May 12, 1846[3]

Mr. J. M. CLAYTON said: . . . The President had sent to the Senate a mass of documents containing that evidence which was to be the basis of their action; but these had not yet been printed, and Senators had no opportunity to examine them. Was it justice either to them or to the President of the United States, to call on them to pass the bill without even seeing what he had deemed it proper and necessary to send them as the basis of their action? He had not asked the Senate to decide in haste like this. Had any gentleman read these documents. They could not, because they were yet in the hands of the printer.

---

[3] _Ibid._, 797-801.

Mr. HOUSTON [Dem., Texas] said: . . . The policy of declaring war might be discussed for months, and in the mean time our troops would be left to waste away and be destroyed, until only the skeleton of an army would be left, while debts accumulated upon the nation and the Mexicans remained unchastised. Humiliated as we might regard her, imbecile as were her people, we ought nevertheless to consider her and to treat her as a nation, so long as she was capable of outraging the rights of America. . . . Having received wrongs at her hands, it was our duty to redress those wrongs. Injury having been inflicted by Mexico, she ought to be punished. Her insolence ought not to be tolerated. She ought to be made aware that we could not only repel insult, but also punish it. . . .

They had marched across the river in military array--they had entered upon American soil with a hostile design. Was this not war? And now were Senators prepared to temporize and to predicate the action of this Government upon that of the Mexican Government, as if the latter was a systemacic, regular, and orderly Government? He, for one, was not prepared to so so. How many revolutions had that Government undergone within the last three years? Not less than three, with another now in embryo. Perhaps the next arrival might bring us news of another change, and that the American army on the Rio del Norte had been destroyed while awaiting the action of the Mexican Government, in the supposition that it was a regularly-constituted Government, instead of being a Government of brigands and despots, ruling with a rod of iron, and keeping faith with no other nation, and heaping indignities upon the American flag. A state of war now existed as perfect as it could be after a formal declaration or recognition of a state of war by the Congress of the United States. Their action had been continually indicative of a state of war, and the question now was, whether the Government of the United States would respond to that action, and visit the aggressors with punishment.

Mr. CASS said: A Mexican army is upon our soil. Are we to confine our efforts to repelling them? Are we to drive them to the border, and then stop our pursuit, and allow them to find a refuge in their own territory? And what then? to collect again to cross our frontier at some other point, and again to renew the same scenes, to be followed by a similar immunity? What sort of a condition of things would this be, sir? The advantage would be altogether on the side of the Mexicans, while the loss would be altogether ours. Their army is maintained at any rate, and it would cost them little more to renew and continue these border contests than to keep their troops in their cantonments, while we must spread troops along our border, and hold them in readiness to meet these invasions at whatever point they may be attempted. Now, sir, no vote of mine shall place my country in this situation. . . . Mexico has attacked the United States--has placed herself in a belligerent attitude. And now let her take the consequences of her own aggression. For these reasons, sir, while we provide for the defence of the country, I am for making the defence effectual by not only driving off the enemy, but by following them into their own territory, and by dictating a peace even in the capital, if it be necessary. . . .

The main facts are indisputable. They are before the Senate, before the country, and before the world. A Mexican army has passed our boundary, and is now upon the soil of the Republic. Our troops have been attacked, captured, and killed. Our army is surrounded, and efforts are making to subdue them. Now, sir, no documents are necessary to establish these facts; and these facts, it seems to me, are all that can be necessary to justify the statement of the President of the existence of war, and our concurrence in his recommendations. . . .

If we meet this act of aggression promptly, vigorously, energetically, as becomes the representatives of a great and spirited people, we shall furnish a lesson to the world which will be profitably remembered hereafter. . . . We have but one safe course before us. Let us put forth our whole strength. Let us organize a force that will leave no doubt as to the result. Let us enter the Mexican territory, and conquer a peace at the point of the bayonet. . . .

Mr. BERRIEN [Whig, Georgia]. The proposition of the Senator is that war exists. How does he prove it? Why by the presence of a Mexican army around the United States army. Does he not thus decide the question of boundary? No. I beg to ask how that possession was acquired, and by whom? It was by the march of the United States army into the territory. If conceding that it was a disputed territory, the right of Mexico was equal with that of the United States to enter the territory. If our possession was derived from marching our army there, cannot Mexico exercise the same right? The argument of the Senator is, that the march of the Mexican army was an act of hostility. If so, I have demonstrated that the march of the United States army was an equal act of hostility. War does not, then, exist by any act of the constituted authorities, in whose hands alone is the power to create war. . . .

SECTION IV

THE POLITICS OF WAR

Only fourteen Whigs voted against the war resolution in the House of Representatives and two in the Senate. In the months following the declaration of war, however, Whig criticism of both the President and the war was widespread. One Whig Representative, Thomas Corwin of Ohio, declared that if he were a Mexican he would tell Americans "Have you not room in your own country to bury your dead men? If you come into mine, we will greet you with bloody hands, and welcome you to hospitable graves."[1]

This section considers the problem of criticizing a President and his policies during wartime.

1. In his second annual message President Polk directed some of his remarks at his critics:[2]

> Washington, December 8, 1846.
>
> Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives:
>
> In resuming your labors in the service of the people it is a subject of congratulation that there has been no period in our past history when all the elements of national prosperity have been so fully developed. . . .
>
> The existing war with Mexico was neither desired nor provoked by the United States. On the contrary, all honorable means were resorted to to avert it. After years of endurance of aggravated and unredressed wrongs on our part, Mexico, in violation of solemn treaty stipulations and of every principle of justice recognized by civilized nations, commenced hostilities, and thus by her own act forced the war upon us. Long before the advance of our Army to the left bank of the Rio Grande we had ample cause of war against Mexico, and had the

---

[1] Appendix to the Congressional Globe, 29th Cong., 2nd Sess., 217.

[2] James D. Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers of the Presidents, IV, 471-473, 494.

> United States resorted to this extremity we might have appealed to the whole civilized world for the justice of our cause. . . . The war has been represented as unjust and unnecessary and as one of aggression on our part upon a weak and injured enemy. Such erroneous views, though entertained by but few, have been widely and extensively circulated, not only at home, but have been spread throughout Mexico and the whole world. A more effectual means could not have been devised to encourage the enemy and protract the war than to advocate and adhere to their cause, and thus give them "aid and comfort."[3] It is a source of national pride and exultation that the great body of our people have thrown no such obstacles in the way of the Government in prosecuting the war successfully, but have shown themselves to be eminently patriotic and ready to vindicate their country's honor and interests at any sacrifice. The alacrity and promptness with which our volunteer forces rushed to the field on their country's call prove not only their patriotism, but their deep conviction that our cause is just. . . .
>
> The war has not been waged with a view to conquest, but, having been commenced by Mexico, it has been carried into the enemy's country and will be vigorously prosecuted there with a view to obtain an honorable peace, and thereby secure ample indemnity for the expenses of the war, as well as to our much-injured citizens, who hold large pecuniary demands against Mexico.
>
> By the laws of nations a conquered country is subject to be governed by the conqueror during his military possession and until there is either a treaty of peace or he shall voluntarily withdraw from it. The old civil government being necessarily superseded, it is the right and duty of the conqueror to secure his conquest and to provide for the maintenance of civil order and the rights of the inhabitants. This right has been exercised and this duty performed by our military and naval commanders by the establishment of temporary governments in some of the conquered Provinces of Mexico, assimilating them as far as practicable to the free institutions of our country. . . .

2. A few days later Representative Joshua R. Giddings, Whig of Ohio, answered the President:[4]

---

[3] Article III, Section 3 of the Constitution states, "Treason against the United States shall consist only in levying war against them, or in adhering to their enemies, giving them aid and comfort."

[4] *Appendix to the Congressional Globe*, 29th Cong., 2nd Sess., 48-49.

> The people of the nation are demanding of the Executive a statement of the objects of this war. What are the ulterior designs of the Government in its prosecution? Why are the people to be taxed to an indefinite amount for the support of an army occupied in carrying bloodshed and suffering to the heart of a sister republic? What good are we, or the country, or posterity, to derive from this vast expenditure of blood and treasure on Mexican soil? What great and transcendent advantage is the human family to receive from the slaughter of our Mexican brethren, or from the death of our sons, our brothers, and friends, who fall by the sword, or by disease in that pestilential climate? The public mind demands categorical answers to these interrogatories, but the Executive has evaded them all. He returns for answer, in substance, that those who speak their honest sentiments in regard to this war, "lend aid and comfort to the enemy," and are therefore guilty of moral treason.
>
> This undignified attack upon the freedom of speech must call forth an indignant rebuke from every friend of popular rights. It is at war with the first principles of a free Government. It is unprecedented in the history of this nation. It can find no sanction, except in the despotisms of a darker age. . . .
>
> On looking over the message, the reader is at once struck with its defensive character. No person can read it without being conscious that the author felt the pressure of public sentiment, and was endeavoring to avoid public disapprobation . . . . It is mortifying to me, as an American citizen, to be compelled to use such language in reference to the message of the Chief Magistrate of our nation. But milder terms would not do justice to its contradictions, or its perversions of truth. And the attempt, on the part of the President, to stifle debate in this Hall, by declaring all to be traitors who oppose this war, demands of us an unrestrained expression of our honest sentiments. . . .

3. Representative Isaac E. Morse, Democrat of Louisiana, spoke out on December 22:[5]

> Why were all your eloquent tongues dumb, when they could have been used without endangering the safety of our army, or encouraging the enemy? Then you should have spoken, or

---

[5] *Ibid*., 202.

> forever held your peace. There is a time for all things. Before the war, or after the war, either would have been proper and patriotic. No; you remained silent as the grave. It is not until your gallant little army is surrounded by thrice their numbers of a treacherous and perfidious enemy, who violate without compunction all laws, human and divine, in their warfare; worse than the native American savages, with their poisoned balls, and respecting neither the solemn obligations of a truce, nor the rights of prisoners who have surrendered under the most solemn promises that the laws of war should be respected, and, when the opportunity occurs, sparing neither age nor sex. No; not when every eye was turned to this Hall and every heart was throbbing with suspense to know whether they could rely upon the support of the Representatives of their country to sustain them in this deadly trial. . . .

4. Representative Robert C. Winthrop, Whig of Massachusetts, had his say on January 8, 1847:[6]

> We are gravely told that we may question the policy and justice of an Administration in time of peace as much, as we please; but that when we are engaged in war, all such questioning is unpatriotic and treasonable. So, then, Mr. Chairman, if the rulers of our republic shall content themselves with some ordinary measure of misconduct, with some cheap and vulgar misdemeanor, the people may arraign and impeach them to their heart's content. But let them only lift themselves boldly to the perpetration of a flagrant crime, let them only dare to commit the very worst act of which they are capable, and they are to find their impunity in the very enormity of their conduct, and are to be safely screened behind the mountain of their own misdoing!
>
> This, sir, is the length to which the President has gone in his message. This is the length to which gentlemen have followed him on this floor. Be it, say they, that this war is, in your judgment, wholly unjustifiable; be it that it has been commenced by Executive assumption and usurpation; be it that it is prosecuted in a manner utterly inconsistent with the Constitution of our country; yet, as it is a war, and for the very reason that it is this monstrous wrong, you must not open your lips; you must not express or intimate opposition or discontent; you must not inquire, discuss or do anything but vote supplies for its vigorous prosecution. The enemy will hear you, and will derive "aid and comfort" from your conduct, and you yourselves will be guilty of treason.

---

[6] Congressional Globe, 29th Cong., 2nd Sess., 143-145.

> Sir, I say, let the enemy hear--let the enemy hear, and let the world hear, all that we say and all that we think on this subject, rather than our rights of free discussion shall be thus wrenched from us, and rather than the principle of our Constitution and the spirit of our Government shall thus be subverted and crushed.
>
> Mr Chairman, I can find no words strong enough to express my utter reprobation and condemnation of this abhorrent doctrine. The doctrine that, whenever war exists, whether produced by the acts of others or by our own act, the representatives of the people are to resign all discretion and discrimination as to the measures by which, and the objects for which, it is to be carried on! The doctrine that, in time of war, we are bound by the obligations of patriotism to throw the reins on the neck of Executive power, and let it prance and plunge according to its own wild and ungoverned impulses! I have heard before of standing by one's country, _right or wrong_, and much as we may scorn such a sentiment as a general principle, there is at least one sense in which no man is at liberty to revolt at it. As a maxim of defence, in time of danger, its propriety cannot be disputed. But whence came this doctrine that we are to stand by the Executive, right or wrong? From what soil of Democracy has it sprung? In what part of our republican history do you find the germ from which it has now so suddenly burst forth?.. . . .

5. On February 10, Senator Lewis Cass, Democrat of Michigan, an active participant in the debate on the war commented:[7]

> While I claim for myself and yield to others the most unlimited range of discussion; and while I do not call in question the truth of the sentiment, uttered during the last war, that a public man has a right to speak to his country, though he may be overheard by the enemy, still there are discretionary limits, which it seems to me it were better not to pass. Every word, that is spoken here, is heard upon the plateau of Mexico. Legislative discussions, with open doors, are, in this age of progress, discussions before the world. As we watch the indications of public opinion in Mexico, and seek them in the journals of the day, the same universal messengers carry back to that country all we are saying and doing, and proposing. Far be it from me to question the conduct, or the motives of any honorable Senator. I believe, that every member of this body is actuated by as pure intentions, as I am myself. But I suggest, is it prudent

---

[7] _Appendix to the Congressional Globe_, 29th Cong., 2nd Sess., 190.

to say here, that it is uncertain whether we shall be able to reach the city of Mexico during this campaign, and that if we do not, she will be encouraged, and we discouraged; she fortified, and we irresolute? Is it prudent to say, that there are doubts, whether we can raise the means for another, more costly, and at a greater distance? To say that the spirit of volunteering is gone! . . . To ask, if we can borrow? If we can lay taxes? What taxes, &c.? To ask, if we can collect them in certain States, that are embarrassed; and to answer no! To inquire, if there will be sufficient unanimity and zeal in the prosecution of the war, to warrant the belief, that Congress would grant the necessary supplies! . . .

SECTION V

THE TREATY OF GUADALUPE HIDALGO

The forces of the United States under Generals Taylor and Scott were everywhere successful in campaigns planned by President Polk himself. Defeat of the Mexicans at Palo Alto (May, 1846) and Buena Vista (February, 1847) and the capture of Mexico City itself in September, 1847 assured victory for the United States. Meanwhile, early in the war, the American settlers in California had revolted successfully and proclaimed the independent Bear Flag Republic.

This section considers the nature of the peace treaty that concluded the war.

1. In April, 1847 Secretary of State Buchanan directed Nicholas P. Trist, of the State Department, to proceed to General Scott's headquarters so that the President might be enabled to take advantage "of any favorable circumstance which might dispose that Government [Mexico] to peace." Buchanan's instructions to Trist follow:[1]

> [Buchanan appointed Triste as a confidential agent. He accorded him full powers to conclude a peace treaty and furnished him with a Project of a Treaty. Triste was instructed to acquire lower California if possible, but the acquisition of upper California and New Mexico for a sum not exceeding twenty million dollars was to be considered "a sine qua non of any Treaty." All other terms of the draft Treaty could be changed, modified or omitted, but not the "ultimatim" regarding New Mexico and California. Triste was instructed to negotiate with whatever Government he found in power on his arrival.]

2. President Polk explained and defended his plans for a peace treaty

---

[1] William Manning, ed., Diplomatic Correspondence, VIII, 201-207.

in his Third Annual Message:[2]

> Washington, December 7, 1847.
>
> Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and of the House of Representatives:
>
> No change has taken place in our relations with Mexico since the adjournment of the last Congress. The war in which the United States were forced to engage with the Government of that country still continues. . . .
>
> Shortly after the adjournment of the last session of Congress the gratifying intelligence was received of the signal victory of Buena Vista, and of the fall of the city of Vera Cruz, and with it the strong castle of San Juan de Ulloa, by which it was defended. Believing that after these and other successes so honorable to our arms and so disastrous to Mexico the period was propitious to afford her another opportunity, if she thought proper to embrace it, to enter into negotiations for peace, a commissioner was appointed to proceed to the headquarters of our Army with full powers to enter upon negotiations and to conclude a just and honorable treaty of peace. . . .
>
> The commissioner of the United States took with him the project of a treaty already prepared, by the terms of which the indemnity required by the United States was a cession of territory.
>
> It is well known that the only indemnity which it is in the power of Mexico to make in satisfaction of the just and long-deferred claims of our citizens against her and the only means by which she can reimburse the United States for the expenses of the war is a cession to the United States of a portion of her territory. Mexico has no money to pay, and no other means of making the required indemnity. If we refuse this, we can obtain nothing else. To reject indemnity by refusing to accept a cession of territory would be to abandon all our just demands, and to wage the war, bearing all its expenses, without a purpose or definite object . . . .
>
> The doctrine of no territory is the doctrine of no indemnity, and if sanctioned would be a public acknowledgment that our country was wrong and that the war declared by Congress with extraordinary unanimity was unjust and should be abandoned--an admission unfounded in fact and degrading to the national character.

---

[2] James D. Richardson, ed., Messages and Papers of the Presidents, IV, 532-533, 535-541.

It is manifest to all who have observed the actual condition of the Mexican Government for some years past and at present that if these Provinces should be retained by her she could not long continue to hold and govern them. Mexico is too feeble a power to govern these Provinces, lying as they do at a distance of more than 1,000 miles from her capital, and if attempted to be retained by her they would constitute but for a short time even nominally a part of her dominions. This would be especially the case with Upper California.

The sagacity of powerful European nations has long since directed their attention to the commercial importance of that Province, and there can be little doubt that the moment the United States shall relinquish their present occupation of it and their claim to it as indemnity an effort would be made by some foreign power to possess it, either by conquest or by purchase. If no foreign government should acquire it in either of these modes, an independent revolutionary government would probably be established by the inhabitants and such foreigners as may remain in or remove to the country as soon as it shall be known that the United States have abandoned it. Such a government would be too feeble long to maintain its separate independent existence, and would finally become annexed to or be a dependent colony of some more powerful state. . . .

The Provinces of New Mexico and the Californias are contiguous to the territories of the United States, and if brought under the government of our laws their resources--mineral, agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial--would soon be developed.

Upper California is bounded on the north by our Oregon possessions, and if held by the United States would soon be settled by a hardy, enterprising, and intelligent portion of our population. The Bay of San Francisco and other harbors along the Californian coast would afford shelter for our Navy, for our numerous whale ships, and other merchant vessels employed in the Pacific Ocean, and would in a short period become the marts of an extensive and profitable commerce with China and other countries of the East.

These advantages, in which the whole commercial world would participate, would at once be secured to the United States by the cession of this territory; while it is certain that as long as it remains a part of the Mexican dominions they can be enjoyed neither by Mexico herself nor by any other nation.

New Mexico is a frontier Province, and has never been of any considerable value to Mexico. From its locality it is naturally connected with our Western settlements. . . .

> There is another consideration which induced the belief that the Mexican Government might even desire to place this Province under the protection of the Government of the United States. Numerous bands of fierce and warlike savages wander over it and upon its borders. Mexico has been and must continue to be too feeble to restrain them from committing depredations, robberies, and murders, not only upon the inhabitants of New Mexico itself, but upon those of the other northern States of Mexico. It would be a blessing to all these northern States to have their citizens protected against them by the power of the United States. At this moment many Mexicans, principally females and children, are in captivity among them. If New Mexico were held and governed by the United States, we could effectually prevent these tribes from committing such outrages, and compel them to release these captives and restore them to their families and friends.
>
> In proposing to acquire New Mexico and the Californias, it was known that but an inconsiderable portion of the Mexican people would be transferred with them, the country embraced within these Provinces being chiefly an uninhabited region.
>
> These were the leading considerations which induced me to authorize the terms of peace which were proposed to Mexico. . . .

3. The more important provision of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, concluded with Mexico in February, 1846:[3]

> Article I.
>
> There shall be firm and universal peace between the United States of American and the Mexican Republic, and between their respective countries, territories, cities, towns, and people, without exception of places or persons. . . .
>
> Article V.
>
> The boundary line between the two Republics shall commence in the Gulf of Mexico, three leagues from land, opposite the mouth of the Rio Grande, otherwise called Rio Bravo del Norte, or opposite the mouth of its deepest branch, if it should have more than one branch emptying directly into the sea; from thence up the middle of that river, following the

---

[3] John H. Haswell, ed., Treaties and Conventions between the United States of America and Other Powers Since July 4, 1776 (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1889), 682-685, 687-688.

deepest channel, where it has more than one, to the point where it strikes the southern boundary of New Mexico; thence, westwardly, along the whole southern boundary of New Mexico (which runs north of the town called Paso) to its western termination; thence, northward, along the western line of New Mexico, until it intersects the first branch of the river Gila; (or if it should not intersect any branch of that river, then to the point on the said line nearest to such branch, and thence in a direct line to the same;) thence down the middle of the said branch and of the said river, until it empties into the Rio Colorado; thence across the Rio Colorado, following the division line between Upper and Lower California, to the Pacific Ocean. . . .

Article VIII.

Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the United States, as defined by the present treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic, retaining the property which they possess in the said territories, or disposing thereof, and removing the proceeds wherever they please, without their being subjected, on this account, to any contribution, tax, or charge whatever. . . .

Article XII.

In consideration of the extension acquired by the boundaries of the United States, as defined in the fifth article of the present treaty, the Government of the United States engages to pay to that of the Mexican Republic the sum of fifteen millions of dollars. . . .

Article XV.

The United States, exonerating Mexico from all demands on account of the claims of their citizens mentioned in the preceding article, and considering them entirely and forever cancelled, whatever their amount may be, undertake to make satisfaction for the same, to an amount not exceeding three and one-quarter millions of dollars. . . .

4. The territory gained from Mexico is shown in the map below:[4] [The map has been deleted.]

5. The territorial expansion of the United States to 1853 is shown in the following map:[5] [The map ha s been deleted.]

---

[4] Justin H. Smith, The War With Mexico (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1919), II, 241.

[5] Charles O. Paullin, ed., Atlas of Historical Geography of the United States (Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, 1932), Plate 46C.

SECTION VI

A JUST WAR?

Most of us like to pass judgment on the men and events of the past. The material in this section may, perhaps, help you arrive at your own conclusions.

1. One view of the war was expressed by a group of fifteen Mexican writers who, at the close of the conflict in 1848, wrote a history:[1]

> Origin of The War.
>
> The Mexican Republic, to whom nature had been prodigal, and full of those elements which make a great and happy nation, had among other misfortunes of less account, the great one of being in the vicinity of a strong and energetic people. Emancipated from the parent country, yet wanting in that experience not to be acquired while the reins of her destiny were in foreign hands, and involved for many years in the whirlwind of never ending revolutions, the country offered an easy conquest to any who might desire to employ against her a respectable force. The disadvantage of her position could not be concealed from the keen sight of the United States, who watched for the favorable moment for their project. For a long time this was carried on secretly, and with caution, until in despair, tearing off the mask, they exposed the plans without disguise of their bold and overbearing policy.
>
> To explain then in a few words the true origin of the war, it is sufficient to say that the insatiable ambition of the United States, favored by our weakness, caused it. . . .
>
> The North Americans, intent on their plans of absorption, as soon as they saw themselves masters of Louisiana, spread their snares at once for the rest of the Floridas, and the province of Texas: both of which countries yet remained under the Spanish power. . . .
>
> While the North American government thus encroached slowly on the Floridas, it was not idle in regard to Texas; but simultaneously meditated its occupation. . . .

---

[1] Albert C. Ramsey, ed. and trans., The Other Side: Or Notes for the History of the War between Mexico and the United States (John Wiley, New York, 1850), 1-2, 7, 9, 30-32.

While the United States seemed to be animated by a sincere desire not to break the peace, [by 1845] their acts of hostility manifested very evidently what were their true intentions. Their ships infested our coasts; their troops continued advancing upon our territory, situated at places which under no aspect could be disputed. Thus violence and insult were united: thus at the very time they usurped part of our territory, they offered to us the hand of treachery, to have soon the audacity to say that our obstinacy and arrogance were the real causes of the war.

To explain the occupation of the Mexican territory by the troops of General Taylor, the strange idea occurred to the United States that the limits of Texas extended to the Rio Bravo del Norte. This opinion was predicated upon two distinct principles: one, that the Congress of Texas had so declared it in December, in 1836; and another, that the river mentioned had been the natural line of Louisiana. To state these reasons is equivalent at once to deciding the matter; for no one could defend such palpable absurdities. The first, which this government prizing its intelligence and civilization, supported with refined malice, would have been ridiculous in the mouth of a child. Whom could it convince that the declaration of the Texas Congress bore a legal title for the acquisition of the lands which it appropriated to itself with so little hesitation: If such a principle were recognised, we ought to be very graceful to these gentlemen senators who had the kindness to be satisfied with so little. Why not declare the limits of the rebel state extended to San Luis, to the capital, to our frontier with Guatemala? . . .

Soon to follow up closely the same system of policy, they [the United States] ordered a commissioner with the army, which invaded us from the east, to cause it to be understood that peace would be made when our opposition ceased. Whom did they hope to deceive with such false appearances? Does not the series of acts which we have mentioned speak louder than this hypocritical language? By that test, then, as a question of justice, no one who examines it in good faith, can deny our indisputable rights. Among the citizens themselves, of the nation which has made war on us, there have been many who defended the cause of the Mexican Republic. . . .

From the acts referred to, it has been demonstrated to the very senses, that the real and effective cause of this war that afflicted us was the spirit of aggrandizement of the United States of the North, availing itself of its power to conquer us. Impartial history will some day illustrate for ever the conduct observed by this Republic against all laws, divine and human, in an age that is called one of light, and which is, notwithstanding, the same as the former--one of force and violence.

2. Another point of view is expressed by Professor Samuel Flagg Bemis of Yale in his widely read Diplomatic History of the United States:[2]

> [Bemis points out that, for domestic reasons, the Mexican government "availed herself of a diplomatic technicality: and refused to talk peace or even to receive the United States envoy. Bemis maintains that Polk was prepared to be reasonable with Mexico and did not order Taylor into the disputed area until he heard that Mexico had refused to negotiate. Bemis contends that "Polk allowed Mexico to begin the war . . . without any dishonorable action on his part to precipitate it." Dispite the total cost of the war, $118,250,000, and the fact that the acquisition of new territory "brought to a head the . . . long dormant controversy" over slavery leading directly to the Civil War, Bemis states that "it would be well-nigh impossible today to find a citizen of the United States who would desire to undo President Polk's diplomacy. President Polk's war, and the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo."]

3. Justin H. Smith, an American historian, presents still another point of view of the conflict in his classic study, The War with Mexico:[3]

> [Smith points out that Mexico did not in the past feel "like the dove threatened by a hawk." Many Mexicans thought that the United States "dreaded to enter the lists." From the political point of view, it was assumed that intense ideological differences over slavery and the tariff question would render the waging of war difficult, and from the military point of view, the United States seemed "feeble." Mexican soldiers were considered to be "decidedly formidable" and would have the advantage of interior lines of supply. In addition, it was believed that the expense of waging a war would be high and that "war taxes" would be unpopular in the United States. According to Smith Mexico "was not likely to suffer disastrously, and certain benefits of great value could be anticipated."
>
> Furthermore, European intervention might well be expected to check growing American power. Smith concludes that the Mexican press clamored for war; the great majority of those who counted for anything . . . were passionately determined that no amicable and fair adjustment of the pending difficulties should be made.

---

[2] Samuel Flagg Bemis, A Diplomatic History of the United States (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1950), 232, 234-237, 239, 243-244.

[3] Justin H. Smith, The War with Mexico, I, 104-110, 112-113, 115-116.

4. Emeric de Vattel was probably the most influential eighteenth century writer on international law. His Law of Nations, published in 1757, was widely read by Americans of the early nineteenth century. Vattel discussed the just causes of war:[4]

> [Vattel maintained that war is so dreadful that it should be resorted to only when all other methods of settling disputes fail. Lawful grounds for going to war may be called "justifying grounds", while other grounds "based on the expediency and appropriateness of the step" are designated as "motives." Justifying grounds thus relate to justice while motives relate to prudence. A lawful war may be undertaken for three reasons: "(1) to obtain what belongs to us, or what is due to us; (2) to provide for our future security by punishing the aggressor or the offender; (3) to defend ourselves or to protect ourselves from injury, by repelling unjust attacks." "Pretexts" may be advanced by a nation as a "justification" for going to war to conceal ambitious designs or some other evil motive." They have the appearance of validity but lack all foundation.]

5. Vattel also wrote on the rights of a nation to the possession of land:[5]

> [Vattel maintains that it is contrary to natural law for a country to claim land it can not inhabit or cultivate. Therefore, The Law of Nations recognizes a nation's ownership and sovereignty over unoccupied territory only when that nation makes actual use of the land.]

6. Hermann E. von Holst, a German scholar, wroter his eight volume history of the United States in 1875:[6]

> It is true that American politicians and demagogues have often improperly regarded the "manifest destiny" of the United States as a pack horse, on whose broad and strong

---

[4] E. de Vattel, The Law of Nations or the Principles of Natural Law (Charles G. Fenwick, trans., Carnegie Institution of Washington, Washington, 1916), 243-245.

[5] Ibid., 85

[6] Hermann E. von Holst, The Constitutional and Political History of the United States (John L. Lalor and Paul Shorey, trans., Callaghan and Company, Chicago, 1881), III, 269-272.

all their ambitious plans and unscrupulous, exaggerated desires might be unceremoniously loaded, and true it is, also, that the stump speakers enlarge upon this topic, more frequently than is perhaps absolutely necessary, to the well pleased, and already convinced, listening masses. But it is equally certain that "our manifest destiny" is neither a meaningless nor an unjustifiable phrase. The claims which have been founded and maintained on this had their historical justification in the proud consciousness that the United States could best solve the peculiar problems of civilization, appointed for America in the world's economy. . . . It was, therefore, not only natural, but it was an historical necessity, that with the growing consciousness and the progressive activity of its creative powers, the republic should set itself broader and higher tasks. And, after its territory had once been extended thus far to the west, it was a proper, nay an inevitable, thought that its banner must overshadow the entire continent, in its whole extent from ocean to ocean. Only in that case could America become to the fullest extent the connecting link between Europe and Asia. . . . In the north, the Union territory, indeed, already extended from sea to sea, but Oregon was too far removed from the heart of the Union, and its coast, poor in harbors, could never give the United States the dominating position on the Pacific Ocean. . . . The long stretch of Upper California, on the other hand, covered the entire center and the greater part of the south of the union, and the harbor of San Francisco was the main key to the Pacific Ocean. In the hands of Mexico, however, it was not only as good as lost to civilization, but it also lay exposed, a tempting prey, to all the naval and colonial powers of the world. . . . If California, however, was not to remain in the possession of Mexico, then the United States were unquestionably the rightful heirs. Such inheritances, however, are easily lost unless possession is taken of them at the favorable opportunity, and in that case force must often take the place of the good will of the testator. No one had the right to cast a stone at those who regarded all wars of conquest as immoral, and who, therefore, passed judgment of condemnation upon this war. But history cannot decide such questions by the code of private morals. It is an established law of historic growth that decayed or decaying peoples must give way when they clash in a conflict of interests with peoples who are still on the ascending path of their historic mission, and that violence must often be the judge to decide such litigation between nations. Might does not in itself make right, but in the relations of nations and states to each other, it has, in innumerable instances, been justifiable to make right bow before might.

In whatever way the ethics of ordinary life must judge such cases, history must try them in the light of their results, and in so doing must allow a certain validity to the tabooed principle that the end sanctifies the means. Its highest law is the general interest of civilization, and in the efforts and struggles of nations for the preservation and advancement of general civilization, force not only in the defensive form, but also in the offensive, is a legitimate factor. The majority of the American people thought it right that, after all other methods had proved unavailing, the President should seek to obtain by force what the "manifest destiny" of the Union imperatively required, and this alleged "manifest destiny" of the Union corresponded in this case to a high interest of civilization, that is to say, to an interest which primarily, yet by no means exclusively, regarded the United States, an interest in which the entire civilized world was essentially concerned. No one to-day can have the front to deny that the Mexican war was as undoubtedly a war of conquest as the war of revolution of Louis XIV., or the wars of Napoleon I., but history can not for that reason declare it a dark page in the annals of the Union. If it must be so designated at all, it is on other grounds.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONAL READING

A brief but excellent account of the Mexican War will be found in Otis A. Singletary's The Mexican War* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1960). Bernard De Voto surveys events of the year 1846 in his lively book The Year of Decision 1846* (Little, Brown and Company, Boston, 1943). Another work of interest is Ramon Eduardo Ruiz, ed., The Mexican War, Was It Manifest Destiny?* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1963), a collection of writings by scholars on the causes of the war.

Professor Charles Sellers has published two excellent volumes on Polk. Volume II, James K. Polk Continentalist 1843-1846 (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1966), is of particular interest.

A survey of the westward expansion of the United States will be found in Ray Allen Billington's Westward Expansion (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1960). A comprehensive history of United States foreign relations is provided by Thomas A. Bailey's A Diplomatic History of the American People (F. S. Crofts & Co., New York) and Samuel Flagg Bemis' A Diplomatic History of the United States (Henry Holt and Company, New York).

Manifest Destiny is examined by Frederick Merk in Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1963). A longer and more difficult work is Albert K. Weinberg's Manifest Destiny: A Study of Nationalist Expansion in American History* (The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1935).

A discussion of the presidency, its powers and problems, will be found in Clinton L. Rossiter's The American Presidency* (Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1956) and Richard E. Neustadt's Presidential Power, The Politics of Leadership* (John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1960).

Carl Becker's Freedom and Responsibility* (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1949) is an excellent study of freedom and its limitations in the United States. Oscar and Mary Handlin have also examined the problem in Chapter III of The Dimensions of Liberty* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1961). The question in a more modern context is examined by Alan Barth's The Loyalty of Free Men (The Viking Press, New York, 1951).

For more information on the nature of war Quincy Wright's massive two volume work A Study of War* is now available in abridged form (University of Chicago Press, Chicago). A more recent study is by Raymond Aron, Peace and War (Doubleday & Company, Inc., Garden City, New York, 1966).

For an introduction to the study of international relations Hans J. Morgenthau's Politics Among Nations (Alfred A.Knopf, New York, 1960) or The Dynamics of International Politics by Norman J. Padelford and George A. Lincoln (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1962) should serve.

---

*Available in paperback edition.